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Houghton, H L (1998), *Young people and organised outdoor activities : a study of opportunities in national parks* PhD, Oxford Brookes University

**YOUNG PEOPLE AND ORGANISED OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES : A
STUDY OF OPPORTUNITIES IN NATIONAL PARKS**

HELEN LESLEY HOUGHTON

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Oxford Brookes
University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

December 1998



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I am the sole author.

Helen L. Houghton

December 1998

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A STUDY OF OPPORTUNITIES IN NATIONAL PARKS

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Abstract

This thesis examines young people's opportunities to participate in organised outdoor activities. It is set within a context of changing leisure interests, a growth in private sector leisure provision, and increasing emphasis on consumer choice. It argues that whilst, in principle, there is widespread support for young people's participation in outdoor activities, in practice, opportunities are becoming increasingly limited. The study aims to examine the nature of outdoor facilities, to determine their use by young people, to identify changes occurring within the outdoor sector, and to consider the changes in relation to young people's access to the outdoors.

The empirical research focuses on outdoor activity centres, in acknowledgement that the residential experience offered by such centres can contribute to the social and personal development of young people. It also focuses on the National Parks of England and Wales. These areas possess a wealth of natural resources suitable for a wide range of outdoor activities and, collectively, contain the highest number of outdoor centres in the UK. A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection, including a questionnaire survey of outdoor centres, interviews with centre operators, and a review of National Park policies, has been used to build up a picture of centre operations, visitor profiles, and the nature of outdoor programmes.

The study findings suggest that a number of factors influence young people's opportunities to participate in outdoor activities. These include centre ownership, safety and educational reforms, planning and environmental policies, and young people's leisure behaviour. Recent years have seen a significant growth in privately owned centres and an associated rise in skills-based activities and non-sporting special interest holidays. These programmes have been largely directed at the adult market. There are few indications that this pattern is about to change. Regulation of the outdoor industry, including safety licensing, has put increasing pressures on

under-resourced centres and has led to readjustments in centre operations and in the profile of visitor groups. Young people's opportunities to take part in adventurous activities, as a result of safety licensing, have diminished. Educational reforms have further dictated the direction of outdoor courses. Since the late 1980s, there has been a marked increase in primary school visits to outdoor centres and in field studies, whilst secondary schools visits and involvement in physical pursuits have continued to decline. Centre diversification has led to an overall reduction in the number of places available for young people. Planning and environmental policies have shaped the pattern of centre development. The emphasis on environmental protection in the National Parks has led to constraints on outdoor provision although policies, across Parks, vary. Changes in young people's lifestyles have also begun to impact upon the content of outdoor courses, such as the demand for more varied programmes and less traditional activities. Sporting and recreational organisations can, by addressing factors of motivation, play a significant role in increasing levels of participation. Given the dynamics of the outdoor industry, the relative importance of these factors is difficult to determine, although the provisions of the Education Reform Act 1988 have induced some of the most radical and widespread changes within the outdoor sector in recent years.

In trying to encourage and assist young people to take up outdoor opportunities, the outdoor community faces a number of difficulties. These include a lack of cohesion and poor image, increasing commercialisation, and the effects of changing leisure interests. The thesis recommends greater collaboration within the community, possibly through a new organisation, to represent a wider range of interests and to act as a more effective lobbying mechanism. It also recommends a strengthening of the links between the outdoor sector and the key players involved in facilitating outdoor opportunities. Finally, it advises organisations to take heed of newly emerging Government statements on out-of-school learning. These may offer viable alternatives to help safeguard young people's opportunities to participate in outdoor activities.

Acknowledgements

This research has been made possible by a number of people to whom I am truly grateful.

I am indebted to my supervisors, Martin Elson and Elisabeth Wilson, for their guidance, advice and support throughout my research. I would like also to thank Chris Minay, for his help through difficult times at the beginning of the project, and Sue Brownhill, for her words of encouragement towards the end. I would like to add that this research project would not have been possible without financial support from the Economic and Social Research Council and the School of Planning, Oxford Brookes University.

I would like to thank Sally Hart (English Sports Council), Kath Pyke (British Mountaineering Council), Liz Lloyd and John Kingsbury (Youth Hostels' Association), Doug Jones (Derbyshire County Council), and John Nash and Katherine Beardmore (Lake District National Park Authority) for their assistance in the early stages of the research. I would also like to express my gratitude to the librarians at Oxford Brookes University and the Countryside Commission for their prompt assistance with my endless requests for inter-library loans, and to Rob Woodward for his help with the illustrations. I am especially grateful to all those centre owners and managers who took time to complete the questionnaires and participate in the interviews. It is their commitment to outdoor adventure in young people which has made it all seem worth while.

I would like to mention all my friends and former colleagues at Zeneca Pharmaceuticals and the Manchester Metropolitan University, whose support over the years has meant a great deal. I would also like to thank my colleagues at the Peak District National Park for sharing my enthusiasm for the project and showing a keen interest in the findings. The final acknowledgement goes to Alan, my mentor and friend, whose patience over recent years has known no bounds, and without whom this research would not have been undertaken.

CHAPTER ONE - LEISURE IN THE 21ST CENTURY. THE RESEARCH CONTEXT AND AIMS

1.1 Introduction

This thesis examines young people's opportunities to participate in organised outdoor activities in National Parks. Its origins lie in the author's interest in the use and management of wilderness areas and in a personal belief in the physical, psychological and spiritual benefits of the outdoor experience.

It is now a decade since the last comprehensive study of young people's involvement in outdoor activities was undertaken. In Search of Adventure. A Study of Opportunities for Adventure and Challenge for Young People, which aimed to provide an overview of outdoor provision and to identify significant outdoor programmes, recommended that ,

'Every young person in the United Kingdom should have the opportunity to take part in adventurous outdoor activities'

(Hunt 1989, p.238)

The intervening years have seen significant changes in leisure patterns, an increasing diversity in leisure provision, and a growing emphasis on consumer choice. There is, however, little evidence to suggest that young people's opportunities to participate in outdoor activities have increased. Indeed, many practitioners argue that whilst, in theory, involvement in such activities attracts widespread support, in practice, opportunities are becoming increasingly limited.

This research project re-examines the topic. It determines the nature of outdoor provision and the extent to which young people use outdoor facilities. It identifies recent changes in the outdoor sector and explores the reasons why such changes may have occurred. It considers the implications in terms of young

people's opportunities to participate in outdoor activities. In effect, it attempts to 'fill in' the missing years, to bring the debate about young people's involvement in outdoor activities up to date, and to consider the issues which need to be addressed at the turn of the century.

1.2 Leisure 2000

Recent years have witnessed the emergence of a new leisure era, which has been characterised by new and changing patterns of activity, and driven by the economic, technological, socio-cultural and political changes occurring within contemporary society.

Research suggests that the individual of the 1990s is, in general, more affluent, has more free time, and more freedom of choice, than ever before. The UK economy is showing a sustained recovery, the average rate of inflation has been curbed to below 5% per annum, and standards of living are expected to rise by approximately 25% over the decade (Leisure Consultants 1992, p.66). Working hours have become increasingly flexible, and, by the year 2000, the average employee will have more paid holiday than at any other time. New technologies have resulted in improved leisure products and services, and have given rise to a wealth of new home-based and outdoor leisure opportunities. Consumer expenditure on leisure grew by over 25% during the 1980s and continues to rise (Henry 1993, p.155).

Other trends are also evident. Modern societies, it is argued, are undergoing a dramatic transformation and are entering a post modern state (for an exploration of the sociological debate see, for example, Clark 1994, Jarvie 1994, Rojek 1995). This has led to a growing visualisation of culture, a collapse of stable identity and, through the medium of television, a compression of time and space. There have been changes within the traditional class structure and a dissolution of the symbolic boundaries between high and popular leisure cultures. Individuals are becoming increasingly detached from social institutions, and societies less collectively organised. The decline of the traditional establishments has been replaced by a growth in new social groupings, which are joined out of choice

and provide a medium in which to learn new skills, share similar experiences, and experiment with new forms of social identity (Bourdieu 1984, Savage 1992).

Mass consumption is being replaced by more varied, segmented and volatile consumption patterns, and individual tastes and values attributed more to successful marketing than to custom. Expectations of leisure provision are changing, and customers are requiring, not only more and better facilities and value for money, but also a better quality experience (Clarke 1992). Whilst modern consumerism is marked by the need for instant gratification there is, paradoxically, growing concern for the 'preservation of place'. The relationship between man and the environment is increasingly questioned, and the social and environmental context within which leisure activities occur is assuming greater importance (Clark 1994).

The consumer culture which characterises contemporary leisure has been encouraged by the ideology of the New Right which has attempted to free the market from constraints on the grounds of,

'individual freedom, through the extension of consumer choice, of economic growth, through the release of individual initiative, of distributive justice, through the entitlements derived from 'fair exchange', and of social welfare, through the 'trickle down' effect of incentives for the able and wealthy to make money'

(Beetham 1993, p.353)

Thus there has been a shift from the politics of recreational welfare to an emphasis on competition, efficiency and enterprise, and to a mixed leisure economy which is dominated by the private and commercial sectors. There is little evidence to suggest that, under the newly elected Labour Government, the influence of the private sector in leisure provision is set to diminish.

1.3 A Pluralist Scenario?

Increasingly, the above patterns of leisure behaviour, in which a wide range of independent groups and organisations appear to pursue their own interests, have been described as exemplifying pluralist theory (see, for example, Roberts 1995, Henry 1993). Within the pluralist scenario,

1. The role of the state is limited to generating the conditions under which individuals and groups can meet their own needs.
2. State involvement in leisure provision is insulated by a) the nature of local government which provides, through the democratic process, a neutral vehicle for local administration, and b) the employment of technical and neutral experts to make decisions about the precise nature of resource allocation.
3. There is a division of power between interest groups which is vital to the democratic process.
4. The market place provides a medium for the plurality of consumer and provider groups, allowing for rationally calculated choice, and acting as an effective participatory mechanism.
5. Leisure participation reflects a fragmented pattern of 'taste publics' who fashion their lifestyles on individual needs and values.

Roberts (1995) argues that state involvement in leisure does not necessarily imply some sinister motive, as the class domination theorists would have us believe, but that 1) leisure activities, like most activities, must be contained within the framework of the law, 2) governments, through their attempts to plan the use of land and regulate the finite supply of resources, must inevitably be involved in planning for leisure, 3) involvement in leisure is the by-product of different areas of concern such as public welfare, and 4) if recreational opportunities are to be made available to economically disadvantaged groups,

then public provision is a logical means. Indeed, an examination of public sector investment in leisure by Coalter (1988), suggests that the desire to maintain pluralism and prevent political interference was part of the rationale for the establishment of the Sports Council and Countryside Commission, whose role it was to encourage a strong and vibrant voluntary and private sector. Leisure providers, the protagonists of pluralist theory argue are, in any case, subservient to market forces, in which consumers have the ultimate choice over the purchase of leisure goods and services. Whilst social class is a useful predictor of leisure behaviour, other factors, it is suggested, such as age, sex, and marital status, are also important. Furthermore, as social identity becomes increasingly transient, so multiple lifestyles and leisure activities can be easily adopted and, just as easily, discarded (Roberts 1995).

Implicit within the pluralist scenario, then, is the notion of,

- consumer sovereignty and freedom of choice,
- the equitable distribution of resources,
- state intervention when market forces operate inefficiently.

These assumptions, however, raise several issues. It is by no means clear, for example, that political parties are responsive to local pressures (Dunleavy 1980). Neither does the pluralist explanation of local policy take full account of the pivotal role played by local bureaucrats in setting the policy agenda. Such professionals, it is argued, are crucial gatekeepers, controlling access to public services, and responsible for the distribution of resources (Coalter 1988). Clarke (1985) suggests that, far from the notion of a 'freely choosing rational consumer', choice is, in fact, structured by economic, social and cultural constraints, including money, time, and perceptions of 'legitimate' behaviour, and by the economic determinants of supply. The market and state play an active role in constructing leisure. Leisure, he argues, is an integral part of the structure of capitalist society, in which power and control reside within the private sector, and state agencies and market forces generate, as they were designed to do,

systematic inequalities.

That a problem exists with the idea of free choice and fair distribution, can be seen by taking just one aspect of leisure, namely young people's participation in outdoor adventurous activities. As the following sections show, despite the increasing popularity of, and support for, outdoor activities, young people's participation appears, at best, to be limited and, at worst, to be in decline.

1.4 Outdoor Activities and Young People

1.4.1 The 'Feel-Good' Factor

Outdoor activities have been identified as one of the most rapidly growing areas of leisure (Centre for Leisure Research 1991). Their popularity reflects, in part, contemporary leisure trends. Increasing affluence, mobility and time have allowed greater opportunity for participation, new technologies have given rise to more affordable equipment, and cultural change, coupled with aggressive marketing has led, not only to the search for novel, exciting and hedonistic forms of activity, but also to the desire for a more fulfilling and enriching experience (Hall 1992). Hence the rapid rise in new forms of land, air and water sports, the shift from club-based leisure pursuits to more individualistic and independent activity, the proliferation both of outdoor activity providers and outdoor centres, which act as a base for outdoor pursuits, and the growth in activity and special interest holidays, which now account for over 12% of holiday trips taken by British residents and almost 15% of their spending (Leisure Consultants 1992, p.2).

The growth of such activities has been widely encouraged by public, private and voluntary sectors, through a mix of pecuniary and altruistic motives. Sport and recreation, for example, have a major share of the leisure market, which generates approximately £38 billion per annum, equivalent to 5.1% of the gross domestic product (Business in Sport and Leisure 1995, p.272). According to the

Sports Council sport and recreation also have,

'a vital role to play in today's society by giving a sense of pride, by helping to alleviate the consequences of social and economic disadvantage, and by having a positive effect on the mental and physical well-being of individuals and the nation'

(Sports Council 1995a, p.3)

In recognition of these potential benefits, a wide range of organisations involved in funding, facilitating, and providing for outdoor activities, have attempted to extend the range of products and services available and to improve opportunities for participation.

Government support is made clear through its grant-in-aid programmes, for example, to the Sports Council and Countryside Commission, which in 1995 to 1996, totalled approximately £80 million (Countryside Commission 1995, p. 151, Sports Council 1996, p.1). Support is also articulated through government advice to local authorities. National planning guidance on sport and recreation, for example, is positive, and aims to encourage provision:

'It is the policy of the Government to promote the development of sport and recreation in the widest sense: to enable people to participate in sport, whether as players or spectators, and to encourage the provision of a wide range of opportunities for recreation so that people can choose those which suit them best. Such opportunity should, wherever possible, be available to everyone'

(Department of the Environment 1992, Para. 2).

The Government advises, in Planning Policy Guidance Note 7: The Countryside - Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development, that *'sport and recreation provide new uses of land in the countryside and are an important source of income and employment'* (Department of the Environment 1997a, p.15). Similarly, Government statements on rural land use planning, such as the White Paper Rural England : A Nation Committed to a Living Countryside,

encourage opportunities for recreation and acknowledge the value of outdoor activities as a means of rural diversification (Department of the Environment, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food 1995). In response to the House of Commons' Environment Committee report on The Environmental Impact of Leisure Activities, the Government '*strongly endorses the importance of recreation and leisure for health and relaxation and agrees that the ability to enjoy the countryside should not be constrained without good reason*' (Department of the Environment 1995).

Although such policies have been directed at all sections of the community, special attention has been paid to young people. The benefits of sport and recreation, particularly in this group, have been widely acknowledged, and policies which aim to encourage participation, to enhance enjoyment, and to ensure equality of access abound (Figure 1.1).

The Conservative Government pledged its support for young people through policy documents, such as Sport. Raising the Game (Department of National Heritage 1995), in which the prominent theme was the encouragement and promotion of sport in schools, and through educational reform, in particular the National Curriculum, which raises the profile of physical education and outdoor activities. The Labour Government appears intent on continuing this support. Labour's Sporting Nation, for example, states the Party's aim '*to develop sporting opportunities for young people to help them foster a sense of their value to society and to help tackle the problems of youth crime*' (Cunningham 1997, p.6).

The promotion of physical exercise in the young is nothing new. From the work of nineteenth century educational reformists, to the foundation of the youth movement in the early 1900s, and to Outward Bound and the growth of school camps in the 1940s, physical challenge pursued through outdoor adventurous activities, has been thought to play a crucial role in the social and personal

Figure 1.1 Young People and Outdoor Activities. A Sample of Policy Statements

Sports Council

'To ensure that all young people have the opportunity to acquire basic sports skills (Sports Council 1995a, p.3)

'To establish a framework which will ensure equality of opportunity and appropriate delivery of programmes for young people' (Sports Council 1993, p.6)

'(Young people) are probably the most important target group for promoting participation in countryside activities' (Sports Council 1992, p.6)

Countryside Commission

'All young people should have the opportunity to enjoy and learn about the beauty of the English countryside and the means of conserving it, and should be able to acquire the skills, confidence and understanding for doing so...(Countryside Commission 1994, Appendix 1)

Forestry Authority

'Helps all people, and especially the young, to further their awareness, understanding and enjoyment of the forest' (Forestry Authority 1992, p.35)

British Cycling Federation

'To provide opportunities for all young people to enjoy the sport and pastime of cycling in all its aspects' (British Cycling Federation 1995, p.9)

British Mountaineering Council

'To improve opportunities for young people' (British Mountaineering Council 1996, p.2)

British Orienteering Federation

'Supporting young people through all stages of the sport' (British Orienteering Federation 1995a, p.3)

Youth Hostels' Association

'Help all, especially young people of limited means, to a greater love and care of the countryside, particularly by providing hostels or other simple accommodation...(Youth Hostels' Association 1996a, p.2)

development of young people (for a comprehensive history of adventure education see, for example, Hunt 1989, Parker 1973, Department of Education and Science 1983a). The Norwood Report of 1943, which examined the school curriculum, supported the view that there was 'moral strength' to be derived from involving young people in adventurous land and water based tasks (Secondary School Examinations Council 1943). Later work, notably the Newsom Report, Half Our Future, which dealt largely with pupils of less than average ability, drew attention to the benefits of expeditions and the residential experience in young people (The Central Advisory Council for Education 1963). The value of outdoor adventure, it has long been argued, lies in its ability to enhance personal awareness, to facilitate social skills, and to foster an interest in, and empathy with, the environment.

In the late 1980s, In Search of Adventure. A Study of Opportunities for Adventure and Challenge for Young People, concluded,

'We are in no doubt about the pleasure and benefit which experience of outdoor challenges gives to young people, especially those least likely to find such opportunities for themselves. We believe that our findings vindicate and reinforce the claims of many people with first hand knowledge in this matter, that programmes based upon, or embracing, this element can be of immense benefit to young people and to society in general'

(Hunt 1989, p.238)

1.4.2 The Emerging Problem

1.4.2.1 Levels Of Participation

There is a chronic lack of research into the nature of young people's involvement in outdoor activities. Indeed, the overall level of young people's participation in such activities is unknown. Whilst visitor and recreation surveys show that outdoor pursuits account for over 100 million visits made to the countryside each year (Walker 1995, p.6), and that the typical participant is single, male, social

class ABC1, and under 40 (Robinson 1995), the profile and behaviour of younger age groups is rarely defined. Alternative sources of information fail to fill out the picture. Thus most sport and recreation organisations do not distinguish between junior members, i.e. under 16-18 years, and adults, whilst the general uptake of outdoor activities within the National Curriculum is not monitored (Department of Education - personal communication 22.08.96). The total number of young people taking part in outdoor activities, through youth service programmes, has never been measured.

Access to outdoor opportunities in the majority of 14-18 year olds is through school trips and youth organisations. Research suggests, however, that the number of young people accessing outdoor activities through these channels is relatively small. The Sports Council's study Young People and Sport in England 1994, for example, which examined sporting activity in over 4,000 6-16 year olds, found that, at secondary school level, only 15% of pupils had been on an activity holiday (Sports Council 1995b, p.41), only one in ten pupils took part frequently in outdoor adventurous activities within school (p.46), and only one in five participated in extra-curricula outdoor activities (p.81). Similarly, Young People's Access to Outdoor Learning Experiences, which aimed to provide a broad estimate of the current volume of activities, and to examine trends in provision, found that 25% of schools did not offer a residential experience to pupils (Countryside Commission 1994, p.20).

According to the Countryside Commission, less than 50% of young people, aged 14-18, belong to organised groups taking part in outdoor activities (Countryside Commission 1994, p.131). Out of a range of outdoor organisations, the Scout and Guide Associations appear to be the most widely known (Hunt 1989), although even during the early 1980s, when membership of such uniformed organisations was relatively high, only about 5% of young people belonged to such groups (Department of Education and Science 1983b, p.46). More recent reports suggest that membership is falling (Central Statistical Office 1994).

One of the conclusions drawn in the Hunt Report was that,

'...a significant proportion of young people, perhaps as many as half, either do not receive, or do not take, the opportunity to be involved in adventurous outdoor activities'

(Hunt 1989, p. 197, author's emphasis).

1.4.2.2 Factors Affecting Participation

So what gives rise to this seemingly low level of participation? And why is it that so many young people appear not to have the opportunity to take up outdoor activities?

It appears, from a review of the literature, that a host of reasons are to blame. These can be observed on a number of levels, namely that of the individual or participant, the organisation or activity provider, and the social, cultural and environmental context or medium within which the activity takes place.

Individual - Participant

Recent years have seen radical changes in adolescent lifestyles, not least because of 1) the erosion of the traditional roles of the family, church and school, institutions which have been associated with the socialisation of the young, 2) the condition of the labour markets and increasing pressures on young people to become more highly skilled and better educated and, 3) the omnipresent media which has an increasing influence on young people's spending patterns and leisure behaviour.

A number of studies have examined young people's leisure behaviour and lifestyles (see, for example, Hendry 1993, Hunt 1989, Department of Education and Science 1983b), and have found that peer pressure, self-image, and the perception of activities, play a major role in influencing participation. In particular, there is,

1. A decline, during the adolescent years, in membership of the uniformed organisations which have, traditionally, provided for outdoor activities. Hendry (1993), for example, suggests that such organisations are often perceived by young people as too formal and structured, on the one hand, and equated with child's play on the other.
2. A lack of interest in organised adult-led leisure paralleled, in later adolescence, by a growth in peer-oriented and commercially-led activities. According to Hunt (1989), young people are more likely to take part in sport and recreation with friends than with any other group.
3. A rejection of responsibility in adult terms, but a desire for freedom of choice and independence, and for recognition by adults that young people are capable of exercising responsibility within their own terms.
4. A perceptual rather than rational assessment of the leisure provision on offer. Hendry (1993) discovered that young people decide whether or not to use facilities on the basis of who else uses them, who runs them, and what is to be gained in terms of self-image.
5. A perception of different types of sport and recreation, such as the risks involved, levels of competence required, and degree of competitiveness expected. Such perceptions are often reinforced through media stereotyping. Young people are less likely to enjoy sport and recreation if they cannot achieve desired performance levels, or feel a sense of failure. They are less likely to take part if there are no perceived social or health benefits (Department of Education and Science 1983b).
6. A desire for enjoyment, fun and excitement. Activities are, therefore, often chosen on the basis of the immediate and hedonistic rewards they offer.

Organisation - Provider

The growth in outdoor activities and, in particular, the outdoor activity holiday market, has led to a proliferation of organisations, within the public, private and voluntary sectors which provide for, or operate, outdoor programmes. Research shows, however, that despite the size and diversity of the outdoor sector, young people's access to outdoor provision is neither guaranteed nor secure (Centre for Leisure Research 1995, Hunt 1989, Taverner 1994, Countryside Commission 1994).

Studies of local education authority provision, for example, have shown that, because of educational reforms, local government reorganisation, and the devolvement of school management,

1. There has been a reduction in local authority funding to outdoor centres. Between 1988 and 1993, for example, the number of centres receiving more than half their funding from local authorities had significantly declined, and funding cuts had led, at some centres, to a reduction in facilities and services. (Taverner 1994, p.vii).
2. There has been an overall decline in local authority provision. Between 1988 and 1993, for example, 30 centres had closed and approximately one third were under threat of closure (Taverner 1994, p.vii).
3. The introduction of the National Curriculum, which has created additional workloads both for pupils and staff, has led to a decline in out-of-school activities, including residential trips.
4. Local education authority centres have widened their client and activity base, for example by offering management training courses to adults, in order to offset cutbacks in income and to reduce reliance on single sources of income.

These studies also show that,

1. There has been a growth, in recent years, in private sector provision which has been aimed largely at the adult market.
2. There is a shortage of trained, qualified and dedicated personnel, particularly within voluntary sector organisations, to lead outdoor activities.
3. Young people's access to outdoor opportunities is often hindered by a lack of information, and by confusion caused by the innumerable organisations involved in leisure provision. Many young people appear to be unaware even of locally available opportunities. Of nearly four hundred secondary school pupils interviewed in Berkshire, for example, less than 20% had heard of the County's outdoor activity centre in Wales, and only 3% had been on a course there (Hunt 1989, p.129).

Environmental Context - Activity Medium

Recent years have seen increasing competition for natural resources and growing concern about the environment. It was estimated, in the early 1980s, that one tenth of the adult population in Great Britain belonged to an environmental group, and that 2.5 million people actively or passively supported conservation objectives (Lowe and Goyder 1983, p.1). This support, based on membership of environmental organisations, appears to be increasing (Central Statistical Office 1991). Recent surveys show that over 80% of the population are now concerned about the state of the environment (Office for National Statistics 1998, p.188).

The potential impact of outdoor activities has come under increasing scrutiny. The rapid growth in public sector provision during the 1960s, for example, raised concerns, not only about the safety of activities, but also about the effect of large numbers of young people on the countryside. It, further, led the Sandford Committee to recommend that,

'In view of the large sums of public money being invested in outdoor centres in National Parks, the subject should be investigated ... in order to ascertain whether the best use is being made of resources and what effect the presence of such centres has on rural communities'

(National Park Policies Review Committee 1974 p.49)

Such concerns, as evidence presented at the recent inquiry into The Environmental Impact of Leisure Activities shows, have not subsided (House of Commons' Environment Committee 1995).

A number of empirical studies have examined the social, economic and environmental impact of outdoor activities (see, for example, Dartington Amenity Research Trust 1980, Hunt 1989, Centre for Leisure Research 1995). These studies have shown that group use of the countryside, including use by groups of young people, can expose local communities and environments to increasing pressure. Recorded impacts range from the careless disposal of litter, to the erosion of sites, excessive noise, and intimidating behaviour. There are also suggestions that such impacts are threatening young people's future opportunities to participate in outdoor activities, by causing irreparable damage to natural resources, by alienating local residents, and by forcing local planning authorities to impose restrictions on new outdoor provision.

1.5 Developing the Research Context

In summary, therefore, it can be seen that,

1. Recent years have witnessed significant changes in leisure patterns, the emergence of a new consumer culture, and a leisure economy increasingly dominated by private enterprise.

2. Leisure behaviour has been described as exemplifying pluralist theory, in which consumers exercise freedom of choice, and state involvement in leisure provision is limited.
3. Outdoor activities are one of the most rapidly growing areas of leisure with rising demand for, and supply of, outdoor provision.
4. Outdoor activities are supported because of the revenue they generate and the perceived physical and psychological benefits they bring. They are particularly encouraged in young people through a wide range of policy measures.
5. Outdoor adventure has long been thought to play a crucial role in the personal and social development of young people and in raising environmental awareness.

Given this general growth in the demand for, and supply of, outdoor provision, and the widespread support for outdoor activities, especially in young people, it could reasonably be assumed that this group is becoming increasingly well represented, as a consumer group, within the activity market, i.e. that the pluralist notions of consumer sovereignty, freedom of choice, and the equitable distribution of resources hold true. The picture is, however, far from clear. There is a general lack of information on young people's participation in outdoor activities. There is also evidence, from studies of countryside recreation, leisure behaviour, and outdoor activity provision, to suggest that,

1. The uptake of outdoor activities in young people is relatively low.
2. Young people's involvement in outdoor activities is determined by a number of, often interrelated, factors such as individual behaviour, organisational policy, and governmental reform.

1.6 The Study Aims

It is within the above context that the research is set. The thesis examines young people's leisure behaviour, the nature of outdoor provision, and the medium within which activities take place, and poses the broad research question: *'What are the factors influencing young people's participation in outdoor activities?'*

More specifically, the study aims:

- 1) to examine the nature of outdoor facilities;
- 2) to determine their use by young people;
- 3) to identify the changes occurring within the outdoor sector;
- 4) to consider the changes in relation to young people's participation in outdoor activities.

These aims are addressed in a series of hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1 - Outdoor provision can be described in terms of its structure and operation.

Hypothesis 2 - The numbers and profile of young people using outdoor facilities can be determined.

Hypothesis 3 - Factors leading to changes in the outdoor sector can be identified and linked to young people's participation in outdoor activities.

1.7 Structure of the Thesis

The following chapters describe how the research has been conducted. Chapter Two sets out the study parameters. It explains the reasons for focusing on organised outdoor activities undertaken from outdoor centres in National Parks. It defines the scope of the study and includes some definitions. Chapter Two also gives details of the survey methods used. Chapter Three provides a detailed account of the research findings. It highlights the differences - in terms of outdoor centres, their visitors and activities - between residential and day centres, and between centres owned by the public, private and voluntary sectors. It also compares provision across individual National Parks. Chapters Four to Eight form the basis of the discussion and examine, systematically, the main factors which appear to be influencing young people's opportunities to participate in outdoor activities. Chapter Four focuses on centre ownership, and the way in which centre ownership affects both outdoor provision and the composition of visitor groups. Chapter Five examines the impact of safety reform and the extent to which increasing regulation of the outdoor industry is affecting the nature of activities. Chapter Six turns to educational reform, and to the effects of the National Curriculum and local management of schools on outdoor centres, especially those within the public sector. Chapter Seven examines the impact of planning and environmental policies on outdoor opportunities within the context of sustainable leisure development. Chapter Eight explores a number of issues, including the socio-environmental impact of outdoor activities, the extent to which modern lifestyles are impacting on traditional forms of outdoor adventure, and the role of sport and recreational organisations in influencing young people's leisure behaviour. Chapter Nine provides a final evaluation of the research, revisiting the study aims, re-examining the methodology used, and re-assessing the factors affecting young people's opportunities to participate in outdoor activities. It summarises some of the problems facing the outdoor sector at the present time and considers ways in which young people's access to the outdoors might be improved.

CHAPTER TWO - RESEARCH DESIGN, ASSUMPTIONS AND METHODS

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to set out the research parameters. The chapter begins by developing the framework within which the empirical surveys are carried out. It explains, firstly, why the research is focusing on organised activities undertaken from outdoor centres and, secondly, why it has been decided to undertake the experimental work within the National Parks of England and Wales. The chapter clarifies the meaning of outdoor centres and young people in the context of the study and lists some of the terms used to describe outdoor activities and outdoor learning. It makes reference to a number of phrases frequently encountered in the outdoor sector, such as personal and social development and management training. The discussion makes clear that the value of outdoor adventure is not questioned, rather that the thesis builds on the commonly held view that adventurous activities can enhance social and personal development and environmental awareness. The chapter goes on to describe, in detail, the survey methods including the selection of National Parks and outdoor centres and the format of the questionnaire survey and centre interviews. It concludes by outlining the methods of analysis.

2.2 Scope of the Study

2.2.1. Organised Outdoor Activities and Outdoor Centres

Chapter One has shown how a diverse range of factors, from young people's lifestyle to educational reform, planning policies, and the mix of public and private sector involvement in the outdoor industry, appear to shape provision and to influence young people's uptake of outdoor activities. The sheer range and complex nature of these components make it necessary to identify some tangible

element, common to all factors, which can be used as a starting point for the design of the empirical research.

Studies of young people's involvement in outdoor activities have tended to focus on organised activities undertaken during a period of residence, in part, because the combination of physical exercise, group work and residential experience is thought to be especially valuable in the social and personal development of young people. Indeed, it is these elements which have underpinned the work of the protagonists of outdoor adventure and which have been embraced in government legislation on outdoor learning (see, for example, Department of Education and Science and the Welsh Office 1991a, Hargreaves 1988, Parker 1973). Barrett's analysis of the 'ingredients' of outdoor adventure, for example, shows that,

1. Various developmental benefits are associated with regular physical exercise, including patience, energy, ambition, optimism, self-confidence, self-esteem, self-assurance, emotional stability, improved body image, and a more easy going and good tempered nature (Barrett 1995).

2. The group dimension can be highly significant in the developmental process:

'A common experience shared by a group should never be underestimated for its ability to facilitate a sense of unity and belonging...The bonds that can develop between people in experiences of common challenge are invaluable because of the sense of support they create...'

(Bunting 1989, cited in Barrett 1995)

3. The residential aspect of some outdoor experiences can be particularly valuable:

'Exciting activities out of doors can only be transformed into a learning experience when...participants live together closely as a group, sharing the day to day tasks, the duties and the lighter moments of community living as well as the excitements of the outdoor life over a period of time'

(Hunt 1989, cited in Barrett 1995)

Outdoor centres are amongst the most commonly used form of residential accommodation for organised group activities in the outdoors (Leisure Consultants 1992, Dartington Amenity Research Trust 1980) and, in terms of the research design, provide a useful means by which the factors influencing outdoor opportunities can be explored. This is because outdoor centres are,

1. Subject to planning regulations and reflect, therefore, planning and environmental policies relating to outdoor provision.
2. Used extensively by educational groups and are, therefore, subject to the consequences of educational reform.
3. Owned by organisations within the public, voluntary and private sectors and exhibit, therefore, differences in operation.
4. Subject to safety regulations, in particular, those of the Activity Centres (Young Persons' Safety Act) 1995, and are having to adapt accordingly.
5. Possess a wealth of experience in dealing with young people and are, therefore, well qualified to comment on changes in recreational behaviour and demands.

2.2.2 National Parks

The research has focused, in addition, on the National Parks of England and Wales. National Parks play a central role in providing for outdoor activities. Designated under the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, in order to conserve natural beauty and promote public enjoyment, the Parks 1) offer a wide and unique range of natural resources from sea coasts to mountains and moorlands, 2) attract large numbers of visitors a year, many of whom take part in sporting and recreational activities, and 3) contain the highest concentration of outdoor centres in the country (Countryside Commission 1990,

Dartington Amenity Research Trust 1980).

The importance of natural environments and, particularly, of wilderness, as a setting for outdoor activities, is highlighted in Why Adventure? The Role and Value of Outdoor Adventure in Young People's Social and Personal Development (Barrett 1995). Thus contact with the natural world has been shown to have important health giving effects and to be a great source of sensory pleasure. Exposure to wilderness areas, meanwhile, can lead to an enhanced sense of self-confidence and tranquillity, to spiritual contemplation and concern for the appropriateness of priorities, to a feeling of connectedness to the environment, and to a strengthening of bonds between individuals.

'Especially this is true with challenging wilderness experiences because of an absence of competition and a very real need for co-operation...the power of the common experience outweighs individual differences'

(Bunting 1989, cited in Barrett 1995)

2.3 Working Assumptions

2.3.1 The Value of Outdoor Adventure

The thesis does not question the value of outdoor adventure. Barrett's review of research literature has already shown that this issue is far from resolved (1995). Thus, there exist many people working within the outdoor field, who claim to see the benefits of outdoor experiences in young people and are committed to creating opportunities, whilst the lack of clear empirical evidence of such benefits has given rise, in others, to doubt and scepticism. Research relating to outdoor adventure, some argue, has focused too much on activities rather than processes, and takes little heed of young people's own accounts and experiences.

The thesis does not challenge the view of the outdoor protagonists. Neither does it attempt to resolve some of the issues raised in the review of recent

research programmes. It does not, for example, explore the processes of outdoor adventure. Such an approach, it is believed, requires a degree of expertise in psychological and sociological processes. Rather it aims to extend and consolidate the empirical data base on outdoor provision, upon which these sociological studies can be developed.

2.3.2 Disadvantaged Groups

The research is concerned with all types of young people. Given the time constraints of the study and the need to take account of statistical validity, no distinction is made between male and female, disabled and able-bodied, rural or urban based youth. Neither does the study address the issue of outdoor provision in ethnic minorities. It acknowledges that participation in these different groups can vary. Cultural factors, for example, are known to play a major role in the uptake of outdoor activities in young people from ethnic backgrounds and, as Hunt (1989) and others have shown, the content of outdoor adventure programmes needs to be tailored to such group needs. The study assumes, however, that many issues, such as safety reform, educational reform and environmental policy, affect the majority of young people, irrespective of background. It is, therefore, in this more general sense that the principle of equity to outdoor opportunities is examined.

2.4 Definitions

It is important, at this point, to clarify some of the terms which will be used throughout the thesis. The expression 'young people', for example, is often used to refer to those anywhere between the ages of 6 and 36. A number of terms can be found which describe outdoor activities and outdoor learning. Equally, personal and social development can occur within different contexts.

2.4.1 Young People

Young people, for the purposes of the research, are defined as the age group 14-18 years inclusive. This definition is based on a number of criteria:

1. It encompasses young people as defined in English Law, namely 14-17 years (Thompson 1995).
2. It falls within the Youth Service's definition of young people, namely 11-25 years. It also includes young people within the Youth Service's focus group, i.e. 13-19 years (National Youth Bureau 1990).
3. It reflects a significant transitory period of adolescence in which young people are subjected to a number of physiological and emotional pressures.
4. It includes a cross section of young people, from those undertaking GCSEs and 'A' levels in schools, to those in higher and further education. It also includes young people on vocational training courses and in employment.
5. It allows for some comparison with other studies, notably In Search of Adventure which focused on a number of age groups including 11-16 year olds and 16-19 year olds (Hunt 1989), Young People's Access to Outdoor Learning Experiences which surveyed 11-18 year olds (Countryside Commission 1994), and Young People's Leisure and Lifestyles (Hendry 1993), which examined the leisure behaviour of 10-18 year olds.
6. It is significant in terms of,
 - a) Club membership, in that most sport and recreational organisations distinguish between the under 18s, and other members.
 - b) Licensing and outdoor adventure, in that the Activity Centres (Young Persons' Safety) Act 1995 requires anyone who provides, in return for payment,

adventurous activities within the scope of the licensing system, to young people under 18, to apply for a licence to operate (Health and Safety Executive 1996a).

- c) Public participation, in that young people under 18 are not entitled to vote and, according to Illsley (1996), have a limited participatory role in the planning process.

2.4.2 Outdoor Activities

A number of terms, which are commonly used to describe outdoor activities, occur throughout the thesis. Thus, '*outdoor pursuits*', '*sport and active recreation*', and '*outdoor activities*' are used to refer to a wide range of activities, from fell walking to water skiing, which involve active participation, are of a competitive or recreational nature, and which may rely on some degree of physical skill. These terms acknowledge an element of adventure, as in,

1. Young People's Access to Outdoor Learning Experiences, which describes '*outdoor activity*' as, '*the use, usually through physical activity, of the environment as a medium in which young people can challenge and discover themselves and each other*' (Countryside Commission 1994, p.11)
2. The National Curriculum, which makes reference to '*outdoor and adventurous activities*' such as canoeing, fell walking, rock climbing and caving, undertaken in an unfamiliar environment, focusing on skills and confidence building, and enabling young people to develop their own ideas by creating challenges for others (Department of Education and the Welsh Office 1995).
3. In Search of Adventure - A Study of Opportunities for Adventure and Challenge for Young People, which refers to '*outdoor adventure*' as adventure '*of the mind, of the spirit, of the imagination, as well as a physical*

experience' and implies the notion of excitement, challenge, stimulation, and awareness of self and the environment, in which activities involve a degree of hazard and uncertainty of outcome. It includes a wide range of activities from traditional adventure sports such as mountaineering, to newer forms of sport and active recreation, such as trail biking and para-gliding, and less physically demanding informal recreational activities (Hunt 1989).

2.4.3 Outdoor Learning

The text makes reference to '*outdoor education*' in the sense of,

'Guided, first hand learning out of doors. An umbrella term inferring a practical approach to teaching and learning which utilises the direct experiences of the students...neither a subject nor a cross-curricula theme'

(Council for Outdoor Education, Training and Recreation 1997, p.1).

'*Environmental education*' is used more specifically, within the text, to refer to teaching programmes which aim to,

- foster awareness of, and concern about, economic, social, political and ecological interdependence,
- provide individuals with opportunities to acquire the knowledge, values, attitude, commitment and skills needed to protect and improve the environment,
- create new patterns of behaviour of individuals, groups and society as a whole towards the environment (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation 1977).

It is acknowledged that, in reality, there is some overlap in definition (see, for example, Hargreaves 1988).

2.4.4 Personal and Social Development

Reference is made throughout the thesis to,

1) '*Personal and social development*' i.e. the development of an individual,

'...upward, to achieve ... full potential; outward, to make contact and encounter others; inward, to increase ... awareness of who we are, and what we want, need, sense, feel, think, and do; and downward, to touch earth, to be grounded, and to connect with the universe'

(Giges and Rosenfeld 1976, cited in Barrett 1995)

2) '*Development training*' or '*management training*' which formalise the above process through the systematic and purposeful development of an individual:

'A form of experiential learning that utilises challenging outdoor experiences, problem solving tasks and initiative activities to teach management skills, build teams, enhance workplace cohesiveness, and develop leadership potential'

(Hayllar 1997, p.6).

3) *Activity holidays* during which,

'a person engages in a cultural, artisanal or leisure activity or sport with a view to fulfilling himself and developing his personality'

(World Tourism Organisation 1985, p.3).

2.5 Methodology

2.5.1 Research Techniques

Concerns about the validity of different research techniques are endemic to social science research, as all have strengths and weaknesses which need to be considered in a research programme. According to Walker (1985), the use of different research tools allows for compensation in methodologies, and provides

an alternative view and data on the same phenomena. Similarly, Hakim (1987) and Oppenheimer (1966) argue that a combination of methods, and the integration of formal and informal approaches, yields the most comprehensive and useful analysis in most research programmes, helping to increase validity and understanding and to reduce the intrinsic bias of single method research.

It was decided to employ a combination of research techniques in this study, a strategy also adopted in previous studies of outdoor provision (see, for example, Dartington Amenity Research Trust 1980, Countryside Commission 1994, Taverner 1994). Five distinct stages were identified, comprising,

- 1) Selection of National Parks and identification of outdoor centres.
- 2) Informal discussions with a wide range of outdoor providers and facilitators.
- 3) An analysis of National Park planning policies.
- 4) A postal questionnaire survey of outdoor activity centres.
- 5) Semi-structured interviews with outdoor activity centre owners and managers.

2.5.1.1 Selection of National Parks and Identification of Centres

Ideally, all of the National Parks would have been included in the study. In the event, however, this was considered impracticable in terms of research time and costs and six Parks were eventually chosen for analysis. They included the Peak District, Lake District, Snowdonia, Dartmoor, North York Moors and Brecon Beacons. Their selection, carried out by means of a desk survey of secondary sources, was based on a number of criteria including location, size, natural resources, recreational use and outdoor activity provision. Collectively, these Parks show a wide geographical distribution throughout England and Wales, are within easy access of large areas of population, and all receive high numbers of visitors. They possess a wealth of natural resources suitable for outdoor adventure, including extensive areas of wild and relatively remote upland, and offer a wide range of sporting and recreational activities. They also have relatively high recorded numbers of outdoor activity centres (Appendix 1).

In the absence of a comprehensive source of information on outdoor activity centres, a list of all outdoor centres in the selected National Parks was compiled from a number of directories (Appendix 2). Addresses were also obtained from the Yellow Pages, National Park Newsletters, outdoor activity magazines, the National Association for Outdoor Education, and the Welsh Tourist Board.

The list included all those centres which were advertised or listed as outdoor centres, irrespective of whether they were buildings or campsites, guest houses or purpose built activity centres. It did not distinguish between centres where instruction was offered by the provider or was organised independently. In many cases, it was impossible to make such distinctions from the information available. In total, 311 centres were identified.

2.5.1.2 Informal Discussions

Discussions were held with individuals representing interest groups providing for, or facilitating, outdoor activities. The aim of these discussions was,

1. To set further the subject area in context and to ensure that the research concentrated on the pertinent issues of practice.
2. To examine the policies of a range of organisations as they related to young people and outdoor activities.
3. To help establish a framework for the subsequent questionnaire survey and in-depth interviews.

A cross-section of interest groups, from national organisations to individual providers, were selected. They included, the English Sports Council, Countryside Commission, Forestry Authority, British Mountaineering Council, British Cycling Federation, British Orienteering Federation, Youth Hostels' Association, Ramblers' Association, Cumbria Tourist Board, Lake District

National Park Authority, and two activity centres in each of the Lake District and Peak District.

The objective of these exploratory interviews was to seek knowledge and information from the experts, rather than to use them as subjects for the research. With this in mind, an informal approach was adopted and, although the discussions revolved around some of the issues emerging from the literature review, care was taken not to guide or prejudice responses. Each meeting lasted for approximately one hour and hand written notes were taken.

The interviews proved useful in that several points did arise which had not previously been considered. The interviews helped, therefore, to shape the subsequent research process and to ensure that it focused on appropriate and relevant issues. Some of the points raised during the meetings have helped to inform the discussion in the following chapters.

2.5.1.3 Postal Questionnaire Survey

The next stage of the research process required a survey which would 1) provide detailed information on centre facilities, visitor profiles, and types and location of activity, and 2) identify changes in both centre provision and the composition of visitor groups.

A postal questionnaire was seen as the most appropriate means of obtaining the required quantitative information from a large number of widely dispersed outdoor centres. The use of a questionnaire also allowed for a relatively simple means of processing and analysing data and, given the time constraints of the study, was considered to be resource effective. As Mann notes,

'...the self completed questionnaire is a very valuable tool...It is best suited for particular groups of people who are spaced geographically and who may be expected to have an interest in the topic under survey. It cannot get the 'depth' that a good personal interview can, but it is very well suited to 'breadth'

(Mann 1985, p.170)

It was acknowledged, however, that questionnaires can lead to problems associated with the interpretation of questions by the respondent, and that questionnaire surveys can suffer from low response rates. In order to overcome some of the perceived difficulties, guidelines for the preparation of questionnaires were followed (Mann 1985, Oppenheimer 1966).

The questionnaire was kept to one sheet of folded and coloured A3 paper and the questions were separated into 3 distinct categories which asked about the centre itself, the visitors and the activities undertaken (Appendix 3). More specifically it asked about,

- * centre ownership and management
- * centre age, accessibility, type and usage
- * opening periods and facilities
- * recent changes in operation
- * age and home area of visitor groups
- * type of visitor group
- * reasons for non-uptake of courses
- * types of activities and sites used
- * reasons for using specific sites
- * liaison with other user groups

The total number of questions was kept to a minimum and most of the questions did not require free comment. The questionnaire was not intended to provide information which would be subjected to complex statistical analysis. Rather, it was considered that simple, descriptive statistics in the form of graphs and tables

would provide an adequate picture of outdoor provision. Coded boxes were included to assist the data entering process.

In order to test the practicalities of the questionnaire design, in terms of the wording and sequence of questions, the perceived relevance of questions, and the balance of material covered, a pilot questionnaire was drafted and sent to six centres outside of the National Parks for comment. These centres were contacted in the first instance to ask for their co-operation in the pilot study. It was decided not to use centres in the National Parks, so as not to reduce the eventual sample size. The questionnaire was, however, reviewed by two National Park officers, experienced in similar questionnaire design.

The visual appearance, design and length of the questionnaire were seen as favourable, and most respondents felt that it could be completed with relative ease. A number of issues were raised however. There was, for example, some debate about the categories used to distinguish between different types of owner and also between different types of user groups. These had been based on categories used in the Dartington Amenity Research Trust questionnaire to outdoor centres (Dartington Amenity Research Trust 1980), and were eventually maintained in order to allow for some comparison of results. Some wording changes were required to clear up ambiguities. It was suggested that a version of the questionnaire was produced in Welsh, for centres in Snowdonia and the Brecon Beacons. In the event, this was considered too costly and too time consuming. It was, however, agreed that covering letters, for these Parks, would be in Welsh and English.

The questionnaires were sent out with an accompanying letter which made clear the aims of the study, the need for a questionnaire, and the importance of the research project. The letter made clear that, even if centres provided accommodation only, or did not normally accommodate young people, a response would be appreciated. It also stated that the research was being sponsored by the Economic and Social Research Council i.e. that it was independent of the National Parks. This was thought to be important, given the

perceived sensitive nature of some of the questions. Respondents were given assurances that confidentiality would be maintained. They were, however, asked for the centre name, address and a contact number, to facilitate follow up interviews. Respondents could maintain anonymity. In the event, only one anonymous response was received. Wherever possible, the questionnaire was addressed to the known owner or manager of the centre, in order to assist in response rates and to encourage responses from similar types of centre personnel. A stamped addressed envelope was enclosed. Follow up letters were sent to non-respondents after 3 weeks. Telephone enquiries were also made to secure a number of replies outstanding. The questionnaires were circulated during early spring 1997 in order to ensure that most of the centres were open but to avoid the busier late spring and summer months.

The questionnaire survey produced a good response rate (68%) compared to other studies of outdoor centres (see, for example, Centre for Leisure Research 1995). Responses from individual Parks ranged from 53% (North York Moors) to 83% (Peak Park). In almost all cases the questionnaires had been completed by the centre owner or manager which, given the small number of staff at most centres, is, perhaps, not surprising. The relatively high response may be due to a combination of factors, including the questionnaire design, the time of year the survey was conducted, the method of follow up, and the topic of inquiry. All of the National Parks were well represented in the questionnaire returns, as were different types of provider. The questionnaire returns were used in the selection of centres for in-depth interviews.

2.5.1.4 Semi-Structured Interviews

It had been decided, at the onset of the empirical research, that in-depth interviews would be conducted, in addition to the questionnaire survey, in order to obtain more detailed information on some of the points covered in the survey. In the event, the interviews also allowed for issues raised by questionnaire respondents to be elucidated, and for possible causes for the postal questionnaire

findings to be examined.

The inclusion of these follow up interviews was thought to have a number of advantages. Such qualitative techniques can, for example, be made more responsive to the needs of respondents and to the nature of the subject matter and can yield large volumes of data from a limited number of individuals (Walker 1985). Conducted on an individual level, they can encourage informants to relate, in their own terms, experiences and attitudes that are relevant to the research problem. In short, they present the researcher with the opportunity,

'to probe deeply, to uncover new clues, to open up new dimensions of a problem and to secure vivid, accurate, inclusive accounts that are based on personal experience'

(Burgess 1992, cited in Walker 1985)

The selection of centres for interview aimed 1) to include a cross section of centres from the public, private and voluntary sectors, 2) to encompass centres offering basic facilities to those providing a full range of services, and 3) to incorporate centres which catered mainly for young people and those which focused on other age groups. A list of suitable candidates was chosen on the basis of these criteria, and centre managers were contacted by phone to gauge interest. The selection process was somewhat arbitrary. Statistical sampling was not considered appropriate in view of 1) the relatively small number of centres identified in some Parks, 2) the complex nature of provision (thus it proved impossible to draw up a list of criteria which could act as a sampling frame) and, 3) the main aim of the interviews, which was to identify general issues rather than to be concerned with numerical precision (see, for example, Fowler 1993).

In view of the time and cost constraints of the study, interviews were conducted in only 4 of the 6 National Parks. This was justified on the basis that an interim analysis of the questionnaire data had shown no observable difference, across

Parks, in the number of 14-18 year olds attending outdoor centres and many similarities in the structure and operation of centres. It was thus decided to focus on those Parks with the largest number of centres or within easy reach of the research base.

A total of 24 managers were interviewed, including 6 managers from each of the Peak District, Lake District, Snowdonia and Brecon Beacons. The interviews were semi-structured in order to allow for some flexibility in the discussion whilst also providing a limited opportunity to aggregate some of the responses (see, for example, Morton-Williams 1985, cited in Walker 1985). A list of questions to be raised in the interviews, and designed to take account of the differences between public, voluntary and private sector centres, was sent to each centre prior to interview (Appendix 4). The questions covered a number of issues including,

- * the perceived value / benefits of outdoor adventure
- * outdoor centre policies
- * visitor profiles
- * reasons for uptake of activities
- * the importance of the youth sector
- * observed differences in uptake and provision
- * links with other providers
- * environmental and social considerations
- * factors affecting centre development

Interviewees were given the opportunity to raise other issues. All comments were recorded in note form. Tape recordings were not used because of the perceived sensitivity of the subject matter. Interviewees were assured that their responses would be treated in confidence. Notes taken during the centre interviews were transcribed and the main points summarised.

The interviewing process proved valuable in that points raised in the questionnaire, and by questionnaire respondents, were explored, and interviewees

brought to light a number of matters which had not been anticipated. Despite the fact that the interviews were limited to 24 in total, similar issues were raised at a number of centres. It was felt, therefore, that in view of the time and cost constraints of the study, the information gleaned would be sufficient to fulfil the survey's main objectives.

2.5.1.5 Analysis of National Park Planning Policies

An examination of National Park Structure Plans, Local Plans and Management Plans was undertaken to determine 1) the extent to which policies make reference to outdoor centres, different types of sport and recreation, group activities, and educational services, and 2) in the light of the questionnaire responses, the way in which planning policies may affect the pattern of centre development and the nature of outdoor activities. The methods of examination were similar to those used in other studies of planning policy (see, for example, Wilkinson 1996, Elson 1998), in that a systematic review of policy statements was undertaken, a record was made of relevant statements, and a qualitative evaluation of policies was carried out.

2.5.2 Analysis of Questionnaire Data

The questionnaire data was coded and input onto SPSS, a statistical software package. Centres identified as providing for field studies only, i.e. not providing for outdoor activities, were excluded from the analysis. Camp sites and camping or bunk house barns were also excluded from the analysis, on the basis that most of the information received from respondents on this type of provision was in the form of leaflets rather than completed questionnaires.

For the purposes of the analysis,

- 1) The responses from questions which allowed for free text, in the form of an 'other' category, were split into appropriate groupings and also analysed.

2) All other free text comments were listed.

3) Responses to Q. 12 '*Is the centre easily accessible by bus and / or train?*' were measured, and input as a numerical value.

Given the aims of the postal questionnaire survey, i.e. to provide detailed information on centres, visitors and activities and to identify changes in provision and visitor profiles, it was decided to undertake a number of analyses, namely,

Analysis 1

All types of residential centre (to obtain an overview of the outdoor sector)

Analysis 2

Residential centres differentiated by public, voluntary, and private sector ownership (to determine whether there were any observable differences - in terms of centres, visitors and activities - between centres owned by different sectors). Contemporary texts suggest, for example, that each of these sectors operates with a distinct set of motives, different patterns of behaviour, and different styles in the delivery of leisure services (Clarke 1992).

Analysis 3

Residential centres differentiated by National Park (to determine whether there were any observable differences - in terms of centres, visitors and activities - between centres located in different Parks). The administrative and operational differences between the National Parks, before the introduction of the Environment Act 1995, have been well documented (see, for example, MacEwen 1982, 1987). More recent research highlights the differences, between Parks, in development control processes which may help to determine the pattern of development (Reynolds 1996).

Analysis 4

Day centres (to compare residential and non-residential provision). It became apparent, from the 212 questionnaire returns, that a number of centres (24 in total) were non-residential, i.e. just over 10% of the total returns. Centres identified as 'day centres' included a) instructors operating from home and offering outdoor instruction on an hourly basis either direct to clients or through residential centres i.e. on a freelance basis, b) instructors providing an 'outdoor package' which comprised bed and breakfast, hotel, or other accommodation, and outdoor instruction, and c) outdoor operators with a permanent business base, for example, a water sports centre, at which activities are organised but no accommodation is provided.

Although the study did not set out to examine non-residential centres, it was decided to undertake a separate analysis for this type of centre. It was acknowledged that the number of data sets was low and that caution would be required in the interpretation of the findings (see, for example, Smith 1996). It was felt, however, that the analysis would provide a broad picture of non-residential activity which, according to some sources (see, for example, Centre for Leisure Research 1995), is becoming an increasingly important component of the outdoor sector. In order to substantiate the questionnaire results, a number of day centre operators (6 in total) who had returned completed questionnaires were contacted, and informal discussions were held to elucidate further the operations of non-residential providers.

Chapter Three gives a detailed account of the postal questionnaire findings, in order to provide a general overview of the structure and operation of the outdoor sector. Issues raised during the informal discussions with interest group representatives and centre interviews, together with information from the Structure, Local and Management Plans, have been incorporated, where appropriate, into later discussion chapters.

CHAPTER THREE - OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES - THE BROAD

PICTURE. AN ANALYSIS OF PARTICIPANTS, PURSUITS AND PROVISION

This chapter presents the results of the postal questionnaire survey. It is split into 4 main sections which deal with 1) all residential centres, 2) residential centres differentiated by ownership, 3) residential centres differentiated by National Parks, and 4) day centres. Within each section, an attempt is made to describe the 'structure' of the outdoor sector (in terms of centre type, profile of user groups, activities undertaken and sites used), and the 'operation' of the outdoor sector (in terms of opening times, income, facilities and staffing levels, reasons for using sites and links with other organisations). This is followed by an account of young people's involvement in outdoor activities (in terms of the numbers of young people attending outdoor centres, the type of group they comprise, and the factors affecting participation in outdoor activities). A summary is given at the end of each section.

3.1 Analysis of All Residential Centres

3.1.1. Structure of the Outdoor Sector

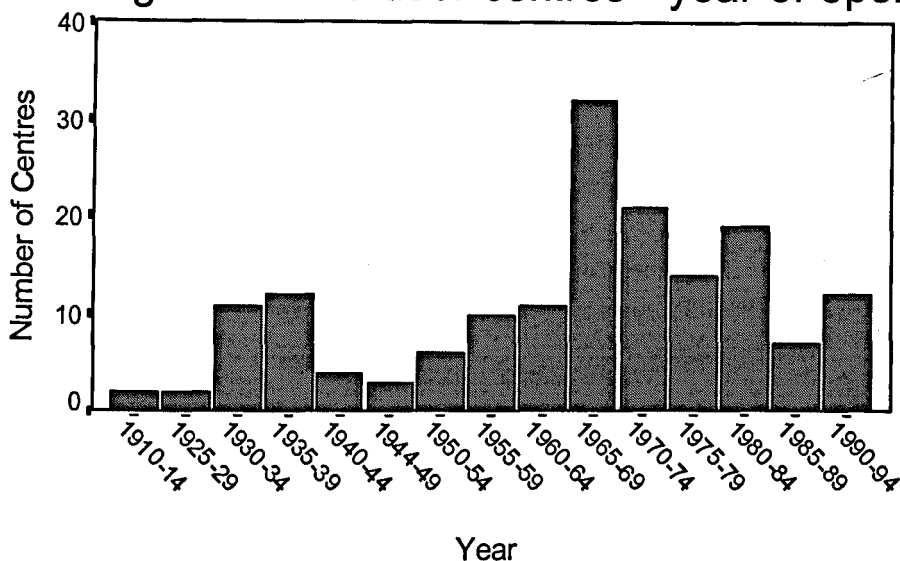
Number of Centres

188 residential centres responded to the questionnaire.

Year of Opening

A significant number of centres were established during the 1930s, although the majority were opened between the mid 1960s and mid 1980s (Figure 3.1). In recent years, the number of newly-established centres has declined. Between 1980 and 1984, for example, 19 centres opened, compared to only 12 during the early 1990s.

Figure 3.1 Outdoor centres - year of opening



Type of Building

The majority of centres, 124 out of 188 (66%) have been converted from other uses. Nearly one quarter (23%) are a combination of converted and new building. Only 21 out of the 188 centres have been purpose built, including only one centre established since 1985.

Accessibility

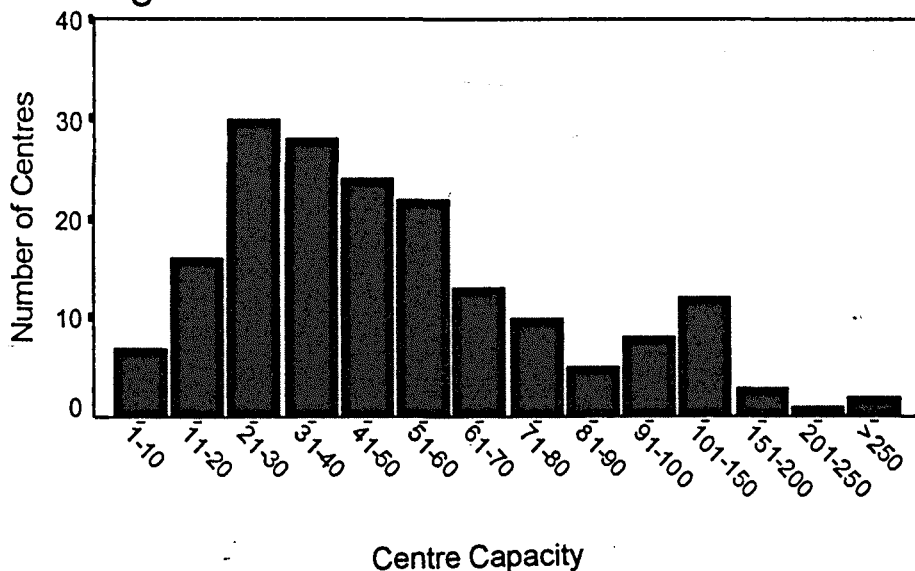
Responses from the questionnaire survey suggest that approximately one third of centres are inaccessible by train or bus. Only 10% of respondents indicated that their centres are very accessible by public transport and less than one half of the centres established since 1985 are considered to be easily accessible by public transport.

Size of Centre

The size of centres varies. Some can accommodate just a handful of visitors, whilst others can cater for over 200. Most have bed spaces for between 20 and 60 people (Figure 3.2). One quarter of centres also provide non-permanent accommodation, such as tent pitches, which can hold, on average, between 10 and 50 visitors. Some centres take day visitors, usually in groups of between 20 to 30, although 16 centres can each accommodate over 100 day visitors. Over one half of all the centres (123 out of 188) provide permanent accommodation only. In recent years, one fifth of centres have undergone

changes in capacity, as reflected by the number of bed spaces. In 20 centres, bed spaces have increased and, in 8 centres, have risen by 50-90%. There has been a decrease in bed spaces at 14% of centres, in most cases to provide en-suite facilities and private rooms.

Figure 3.2 Centre size

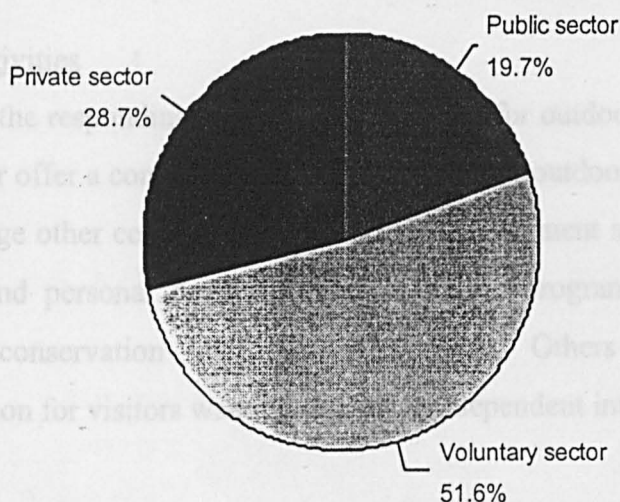


Centre Ownership

The public, voluntary and private sectors have a differential share of the outdoor market, and centre ownership is split 20, 52, 29% respectively (Figure 3.3). The public sector portion is comprised of local education authority centres (65%) and centres belonging to other local government departments. The National Park Authorities, Sports Council, and Forest Enterprise, together own 5 properties. Centres within the voluntary sector are owned by the Youth Hostels' Association, National Trust, and other charitable trusts and organisations. The Youth Hostels' Association has a major share (44%) of voluntary sector provision. One third of centres belong to the private sector and include family businesses, centres owned by schools and colleges, and those belonging to other private enterprises such as the Water Authorities. A number of centres have undergone changes in ownership since the mid 1980s. Questionnaire comments suggest that many of these changes have occurred due

to local authority reorganisation and, for example, the transfer of centres from one department to another, or from one authority to another. There have been some changes with the introduction of unitary authorities. Some centres have passed from local authority ownership to private ownership. The private sector has increased its share of the market. Of the 25 centres opened since 1985, for example, 18 are in private ownership.

Figure 3.3 Centre ownership



Centre Management

Centre management largely reflects ownership patterns. Thus the public, voluntary, and private sector share is 18, 53, and 29% respectively. Some centres are leased to, or run by, other organisations. The National Trust, for example, leases 3 properties to the Youth Hostels' Association. 22 centres have undergone management restructuring since the 1980s, including the appointment of new centre heads or wardens, and financial or business managers. Some centres have seen a change in leasing arrangements.

Range of User Groups

The centres attract a wide range of user groups including primary and secondary schools, colleges and universities, youth and special needs, businesses and special interest groups, armed forces, individuals and families. Most centres (70%) are used by both groups and individuals. Just over one

quarter (28%) accommodate groups only. A very small proportion (2%) cater for individuals only. Within the last 10 years, there have been a number of changes in the profile of visiting groups, including an increase in primary school users (reported by 30 respondents), a reduction in secondary school users (reported by 25 respondents), an overall decline in school groups (reported by 15 respondents), fluctuations in the number of youth and further education groups (reported by 10 respondents), and an increase in family groups (reported by 18 respondents).

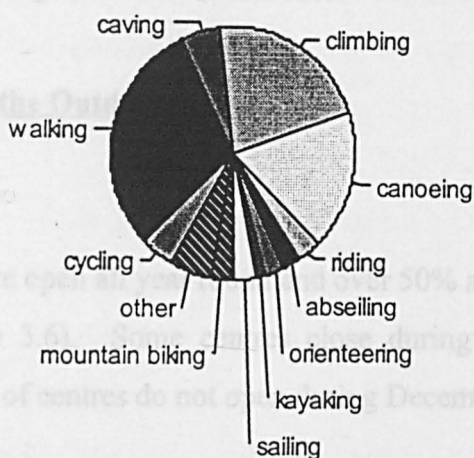
Range of Activities

One third of the responding centres provide solely for outdoor activities whilst the remainder offer a combination of field studies and outdoor activities. Some centres arrange other courses, for example, in management and skills training, and social and personal development. Some run programmes in religious instruction, conservation work, and the arts. Others simply provide accommodation for visitors wanting to pursue independent interests.

The most popular outdoor activities in which visitors take part are walking (recorded by 86% of respondents), climbing (65%), canoeing (54%), caving (17%), cycling (14%), and riding (11%). A large number of other outdoor pursuits are commonly undertaken (Figures 3.4 and 3.5).

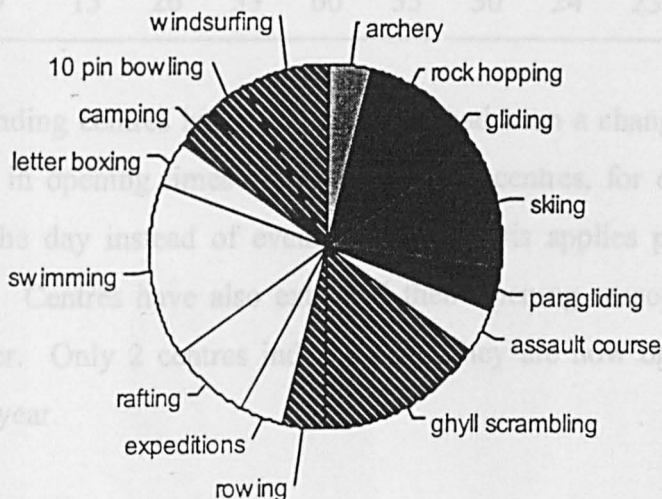
Questionnaire comments indicate that recent years have seen 1) a significant increase in field studies to meet National Curriculum requirements, 2) the introduction of new pursuits to cater for young people's demands for novel activities, 3) a shortening of some outdoor programmes to cut costs, and 4) a growth in skills training and special interest holidays for adults, to meet changing market demands. These issues were further explored during the centre interviews and are discussed in later chapters.

Figure 3.4 Main outdoor activities



Other = activities recorded less than 5 times (see below)

Figure 3.5 Other outdoor activities



Range of Sites

The activities appear to take place over a wide range of sites although many responses were non-specific, for example, 'The Black Mountains' and the 'South Lakes'. Some pursuits are undertaken out of the National Parks, for example, dry skiing in Sheffield. A number of sites were recorded several times, including Stanage and the Roaches (in the Peak Park), Tremadog and Cader Idris (in Snowdonia), and Ullswater, Eskdale, Derwentwater, Bassenthwaite, Borrowdale, Ennerdale, Coniston Fell and Lake Coniston (in

the Lake District). Respondents' comments suggest that, increasingly, payment for access is determining the choice of site used.

3.1.2. Operation of the Outdoor Sector

Opening Periods

Most of the centres are open all year round and over 50% are fully booked from May to July (Figure 3.6). Some centres close during the winter months. Between 15 and 20% of centres do not open during December and January.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Open	80	90	97	100	98	98	98	95	99	98	89	83
Full	3	9	15	26	53	60	55	30	24	23	10	4

18% of responding centres indicated that there had been a change, within the last 10 years, in opening times or season. Many centres, for example, now open during the day instead of evenings only. This applies particularly to youth hostels. Centres have also extended their opening seasons, especially over the winter. Only 2 centres indicated that they are now open for fewer months of the year.

Funding

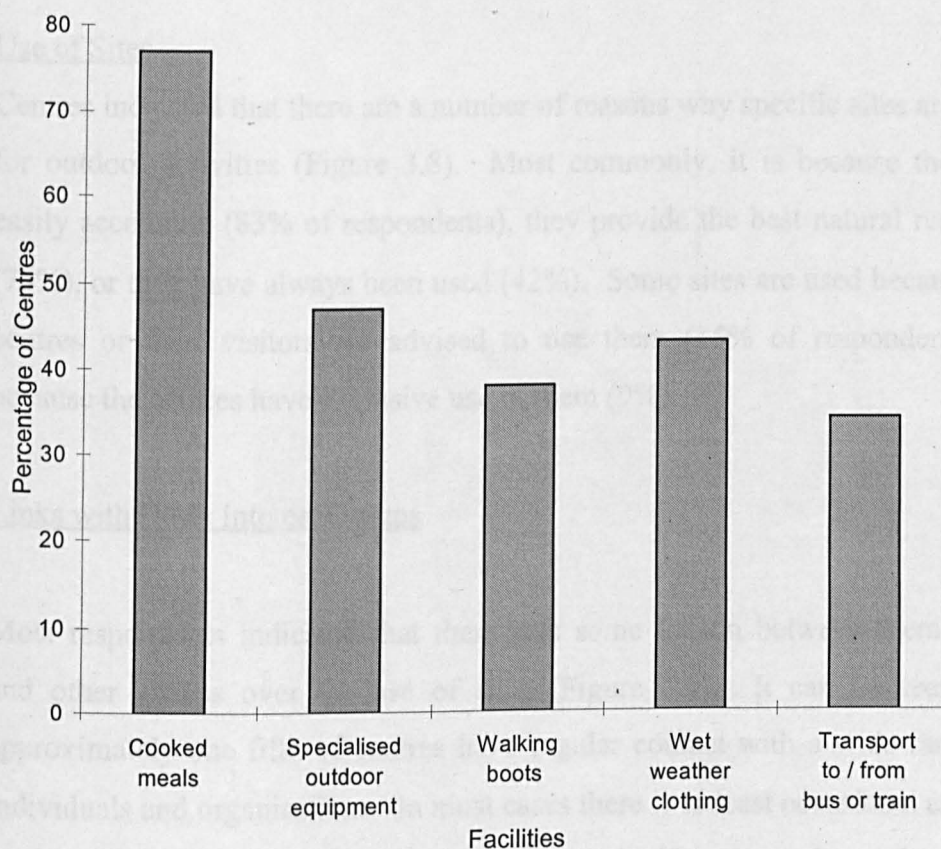
Centre income, according to respondents' comments, is derived from a variety of sources including course fees, local authority subsidies, government and public agency grants and donations. 17% of all respondents reported a change, within the last 10 years, in the level of funding they receive from sponsoring organisations. A few centres indicated that they had attracted more funding and grant aid, for example from the Sports Aid Foundation and European Union. In most cases, however, funding had been reduced (22 out of 188 responses). Government subsidies to local education authority centres varied from between 25-80%. The majority of the local education authority centres

reported a reduction in subsidy, in some cases of up to 50%. Respondents comments revealed that funding cuts had led to changes in centre operations including a reduction in centre staff and change in the type of courses offered.

Range of Facilities

Centre facilities vary. Over three quarters of centres (77%) provide cooked meals, nearly one half have specialised equipment for outdoor activities, and a large number provide walking boots and wet weather clothing (Figure 3.7). One third of centres can arrange to collect visitors from the nearest bus or train station. Approximately one third of all centres provide visitors with information on public transport, walking and cycling routes, and recommended activity sites.

Figure 3.7 Centre facilities



Nearly one half of all the responding centres have undergone improvements in recent years, such as the refurbishment of bathrooms and kitchens, the extension of classrooms and storerooms, and the introduction of new sporting equipment.

Range of Staff

One quarter of the responding centres use their own tutors or instructors to lead outdoor activities, whilst nearly one half (44%) rely solely on visiting staff including group leaders and freelance instructors. The remainder use a mix of internal and external staff. Questionnaire comments suggest that the number of professional staff employed at centres is generally low, typically two to five instructors plus administrative and domestic staff. The majority of centres (68%) have seen no change in staffing levels in recent years. In the remainder, there has been an overall increase in staff (42 centres, compared to 12 centres which have undergone cuts). Most of the cuts in staffing levels have occurred within the public sector. According to respondents, recent years have seen an increase in the number of freelance instructors being employed to lead outdoor activities.

Use of Sites

Centres indicated that there are a number of reasons why specific sites are used for outdoor activities (Figure 3.8). Most commonly, it is because they are easily accessible (83% of respondents), they provide the best natural resource (73%), or they have always been used (42%). Some sites are used because the centres or their visitors are advised to use them (15% of respondents) or because the centres have exclusive use of them (9%).

Links with Other Interest Groups

Most respondents indicated that there was some liaison between themselves and other groups over the use of sites (Figure 3.9). It can be seen that approximately one fifth of centres have regular contact with a wide range of individuals and organisations. In most cases there is at least occasional contact between the centres and these groups. A significant number of centres, however, do not liaise with other bodies over the use of sites.

Figure 3.8 Reasons for using sites

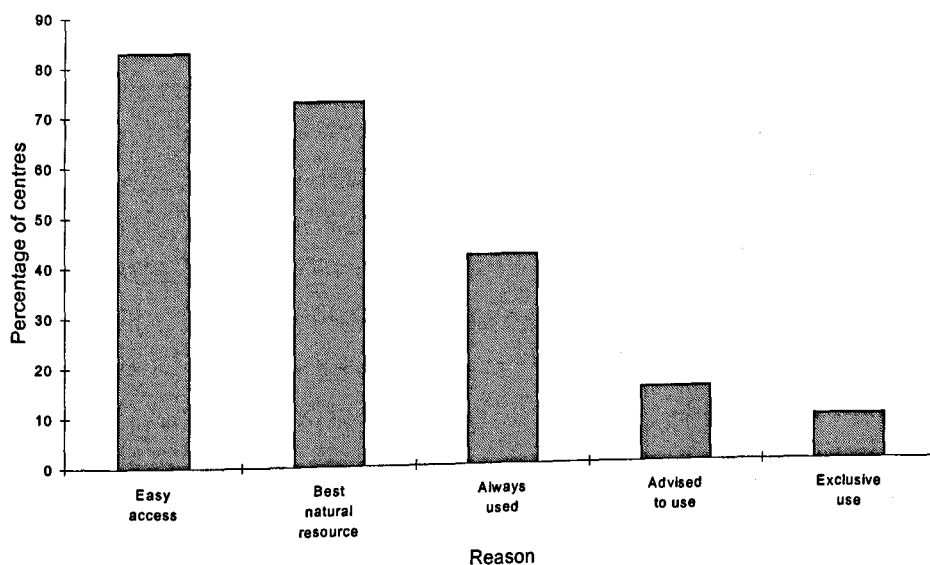
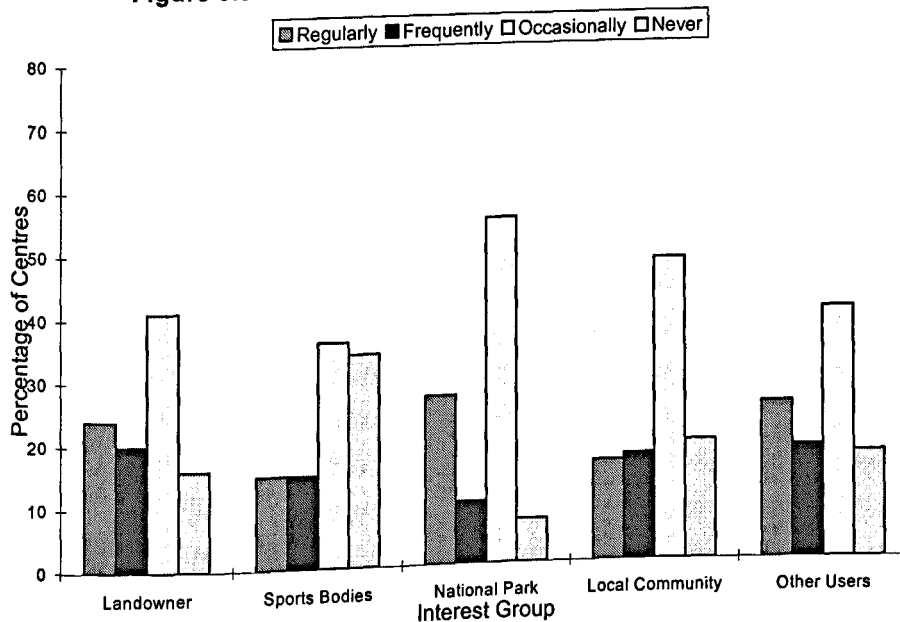


Figure 3.9 Centre links with other interest groups (all centres)



When the analysis was repeated for a) centres providing their own tutors / instructors and b) centres which rely solely on visiting staff, two different pictures emerge (Figures 3.10 and 3.11). Thus the amount of regular and frequent contact with other interest groups is much higher in those centres with their own staff than in those which rely on external staff. Similarly the number of incidences in which there is never any liaison with other interest groups is twice as high in centres which use external staff.

Figure 3.10 Centre links with other interest groups (centres using own staff)

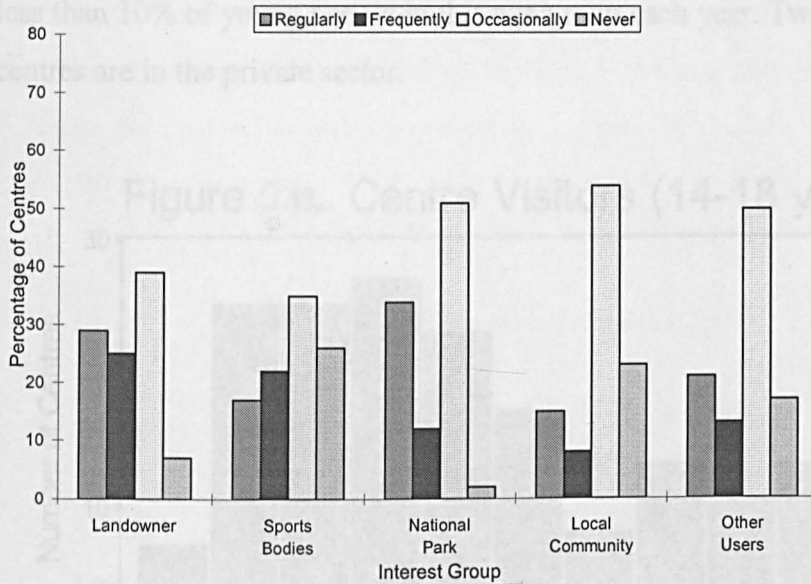
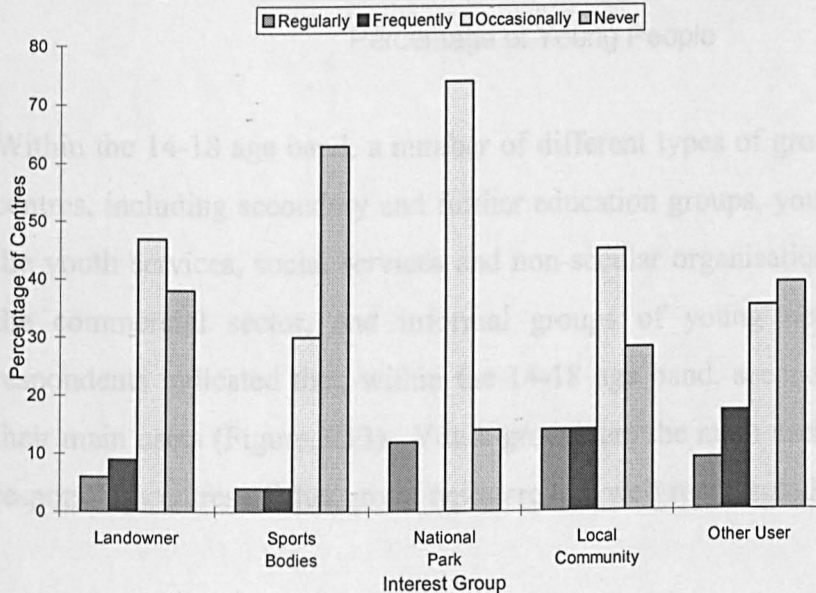


Figure 3.11 Centre links with other interest groups (centres using external staff)

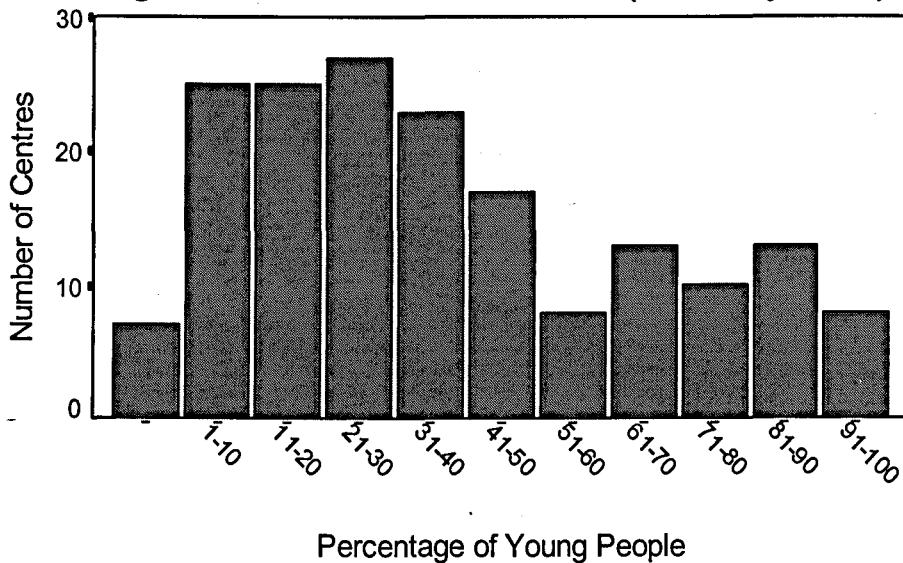


3.1.3 A Profile of Young People

The results show that, of the total number of visitors attending residential centres, an average of 41% are 14-18 years old. Between centres there is, however, a wide variation (Figure 3.12). 7 of the responding centres, for

example, do not accommodate 14-18 year olds and a further 23 centres take in less than 10% of young people in this age group each year. Two thirds of these centres are in the private sector.

Figure 3.12. Centre Visitors (14-18 years)

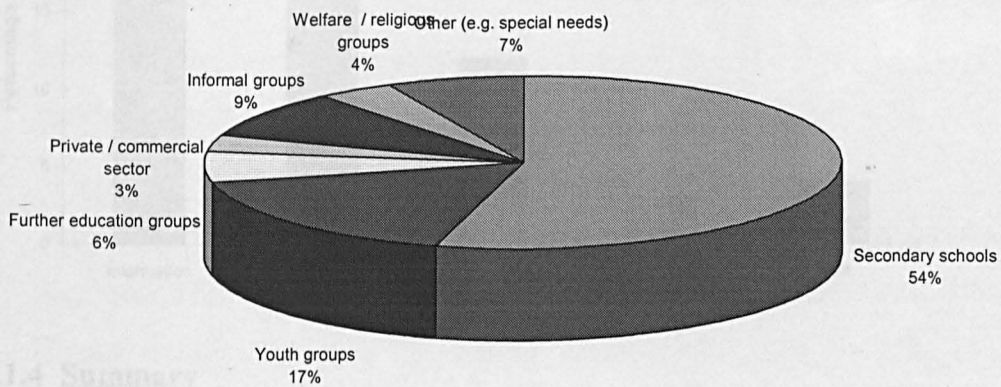


Within the 14-18 age band, a number of different types of group visit outdoor centres, including secondary and further education groups, young people from the youth services, social services and non-secular organisations, groups from the commercial sector, and informal groups of young people. 54% of respondents indicated that, within the 14-18 age band, secondary schools are their main users (Figure 3.13). Youth groups are the main users at 17% of the responding centres. Other group types are less well represented.

Recent years, as already indicated, have seen changes in the profile of visiting groups. Thus, there has been an increase in primary school users, an overall decline in school groups, fluctuations in the number of youth groups (questionnaire respondents indicated, for example, that there had been an increase in groups from the Scout Association, Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, and the Prince's Trust), and an increase in family groups. A few centres recorded a decline in the number of young people referred through the social services.

The results show that, within the 14-18 age group, most visitors live a considerable distance from the centres. Nearly one half (44%) of the responding centres indicated that none of their visiting groups live within 50 miles of the centre. In one quarter of the centres, all visitors, aged 14-18, live over 100 miles away.

Figure 3.13 Main user group (14-18 years)

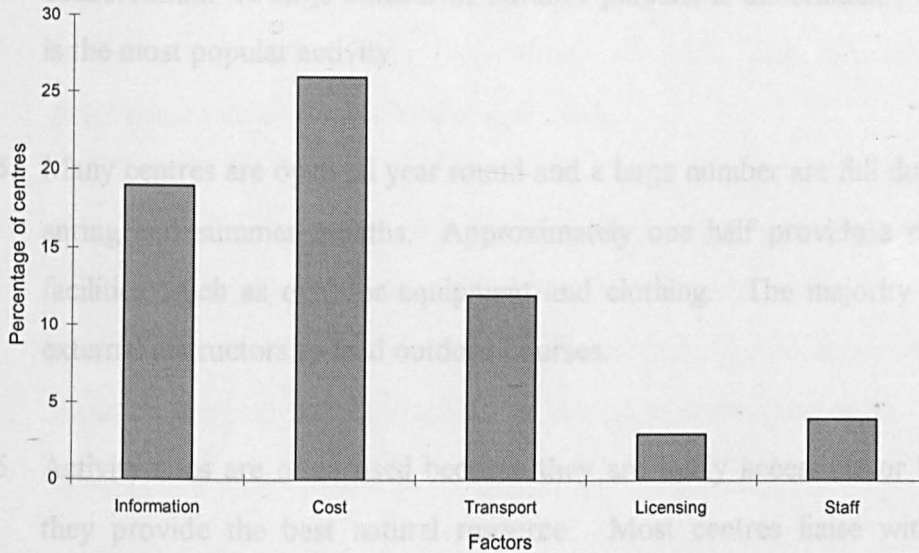


A number of factors are thought to deter or prevent 14-18 year olds from visiting outdoor centres (Figure 3.14). These include an inability or unwillingness to meet course costs (recorded by 26% of centre respondents), a lack of information on outdoor opportunities (19% of respondents), and a lack of transport (12% of respondents). Few respondents (less than 5%) attributed low attendance levels to a lack of centre staff or licensing restrictions although, when interviewed, several centre managers were concerned that the licensing scheme would have implications for future outdoor opportunities (see Chapter Five).

Nearly one half of all respondents (45%) indicated that other factors also hindered the uptake of outdoor courses. The most commonly recorded comments referred to 1) the pressures of the National Curriculum, 2) a lack of teacher or school commitment to outdoor learning through outdoor adventurous activities, and 3) centre diversification. A few centres suggested

that the lack of uptake may be due to lack of interest, by young people, in outdoor activities.

Figure 3.14 Factors influencing uptake of activities (14-18 years)



3.1.4 Summary

An analysis of residential centres shows that,

1. There are a large number of residential centres in the National Parks, most of which have been converted from other uses and have been open for at least 10 to 20 years.
2. Centre ownership and management is split between the public, private and voluntary sectors. The voluntary sector owns and manages over 50% of all centres. The Youth Hostels' Association has a significant share of voluntary sector provision. The public sector owns one fifth of centres. The majority of these belong to local education authorities.
3. Centres cater for between 20 and 60 residential visitors at any one time and most can accommodate a mix of both groups and individuals. A significant number also provide non-permanent accommodation and run courses for

day visitors

4. Two thirds of centres offer both outdoor activities and field studies and a wide range of other courses, from management training to practical conservation. A large number of outdoor pursuits is undertaken. Walking is the most popular activity.
5. Many centres are open all year round and a large number are full during the spring and summer months. Approximately one half provide a range of facilities, such as outdoor equipment and clothing. The majority rely on external instructors to lead outdoor courses.
6. Activity sites are often used because they are easily accessible or because they provide the best natural resource. Most centres liaise with other interest groups, including landowners, sports bodies, the National Park Authorities, local communities, and other users, over the use of sites. In some cases there is no liaison with other users. There are far fewer links with other users in centres which do not employ their own instructors.
7. There have been a number of changes in the structure and operation of residential centres in recent years. Several centres have expanded, improved facilities, and increased staffing levels. Some centres, especially in the public sector, have seen staff numbers decline. There have been some changes in the management and ownership of centres, for example, through departmental transfer. A significant number of centres, including most local education authority centres, have seen cuts in funding. Centre diversification is becoming commonplace. Payment for access is, in some cases, influencing the choice of activity sites.
8. Approximately 40% of the total number of visitors to outdoor centres each year are aged 14-18. Within this age band, secondary schools are the main

user group. Youth groups are also common visitors to outdoor centres. Most visiting groups live at least 50 miles from the centres.

9. Recent years have seen an increase in primary school group visits to outdoor centres but an overall decline in school groups. There is, increasingly, more emphasis on field studies, new forms of sport and recreation, and programmes tailored to suit individual needs.

10. A number of factors deter or prevent young people from taking up activity courses, such as course costs and a lack of information on the opportunities available. Other factors are also significant, including constraints brought about by the National Curriculum and a lack of interest in outdoor activity programmes.

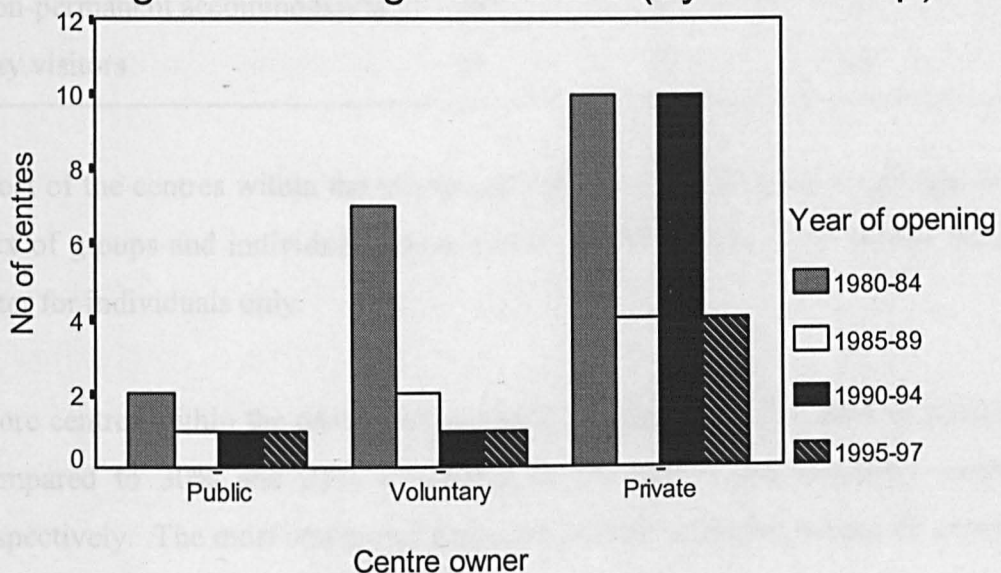
3.2 Analysis of Residential Centres by Ownership

3.2.1 Structure of the Outdoor Sector

The public, voluntary and private sector share of outdoor centres, as already indicated, is 20, 52, 29% respectively.

Most of the centres owned by the public and voluntary sectors were established between the mid 1960s and mid 1980s. Within the private sector, a large proportion of centres has been established more recently. One fifth of privately owned centres, for example, opened during the early 1980s, and 18 have opened since 1985 (Figure 3.15).

Figure 3.15 Age of centre (by ownership)



Across all sectors, the majority of centres (65%) have been converted from other uses, although a slightly higher percentage of centres owned by the public sector and voluntary organisations have been purpose built compared to privately owned centres.

In general, privately owned centres are more accessible by public transport. Within the public sector, 16 out of 37 responding centres indicated that they are inaccessible by public transport.

Voluntary sector centres can accommodate more staying visitors, in either permanent or non-permanent accommodation, than publicly or privately owned centres (Figure 3.16) although, in each sector, there is a great deal of variation in centre capacity. Privately owned centres can cater for larger numbers of day visitors.

Figure 3.16 Average number of visitors per centre (by ownership)

	Public	Private	Voluntary
Permanent accommodation	39	46	65
Non-permanent accommodation	44	42	50
Day visitors	51	79	63

Most of the centres within the public and voluntary sectors cater for groups or a mix of groups and individuals. Four out of the 54 centres in the private sector cater for individuals only.

More centres within the private sector (41%) provide solely for outdoor pursuits compared to 30% and 23% of centres in the public and voluntary sectors respectively. The most commonly recorded outdoor activities, across all sectors, were walking, climbing and canoeing.

3.2.2 Operation of the Outdoor Sector

Nearly all of the responding centres in the private sector are open all year round, the quietest seasons being December and January. Over one third of centres in this sector are full from May to August. Within the voluntary and public sectors

slightly more centres are closed during the winter months. A similar number are full during the summer season.

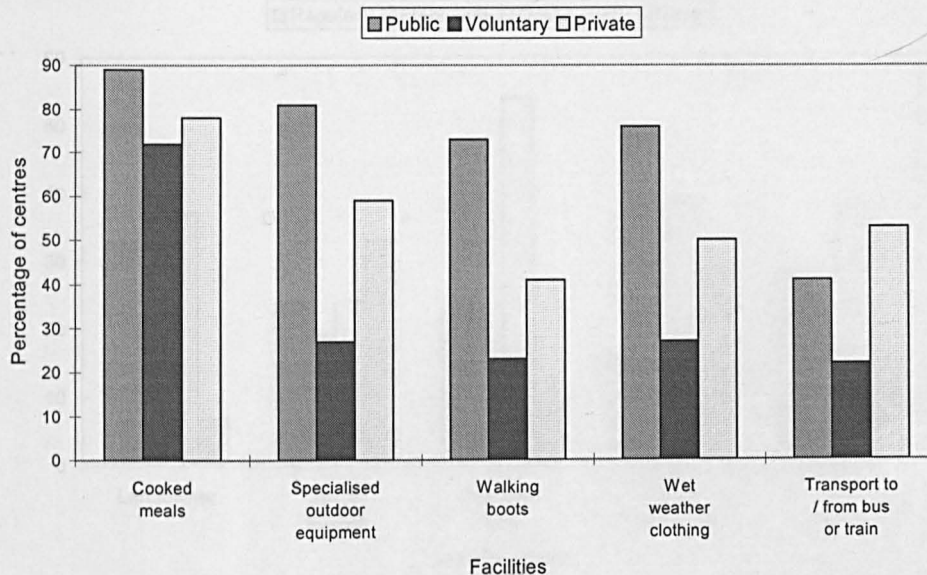
There is a noticeable difference in the facilities provided by centres within each sector (Figure 3.17). Within the public sector, for example, 81% of responding centres provide equipment for outdoor activities compared to only 27% of centres owned by voluntary organisations. Many more centres within both the public and private sectors can provide wet weather gear and arrange to collect visiting groups from nearby bus and train stations than centres within the voluntary sector. Approximately one half of centres within all sectors provide information on public transport, walking and cycling routes.

Centres, across all sectors, have undergone improvements in recent years, although the voluntary sector has seen more changes, overall, in centre capacity. Bed spaces at many centres, especially within the voluntary sector, have been reduced in order to increase the number of private and family rooms.

Voluntary sector centres rely more heavily on the use of external staff (60% of responding centres) compared to the public and private sectors (22%, 33% of responding centres respectively). There have been significantly more cut backs in staffing levels in public sector centres, in recent years, than in centres owned by the private or voluntary sectors. As already indicated, the majority of local education authority centres have undergone a reduction in local government subsidy, in some cases of up to 50%.

The main reason given, across all sectors, for using specific sites is because they are easily accessible. Sites are also used because they provide the best resource. Twice the number of centres in the voluntary sector, as in other sectors, indicated that sites are used because the centres or their visitors are advised to use them.

Figure 3.17 Centre facilities (by ownership)



There is a marked difference, across sectors, in the amount of contact centres have with other interest groups over the use of sites (Figures 3.18, 3.19 and 3.20). In particular, the number of responding centres which never liaise with other interest groups is much greater in the private and voluntary sector than in the public sector.

Figure 3.18 Centre links with other interest groups (public sector)

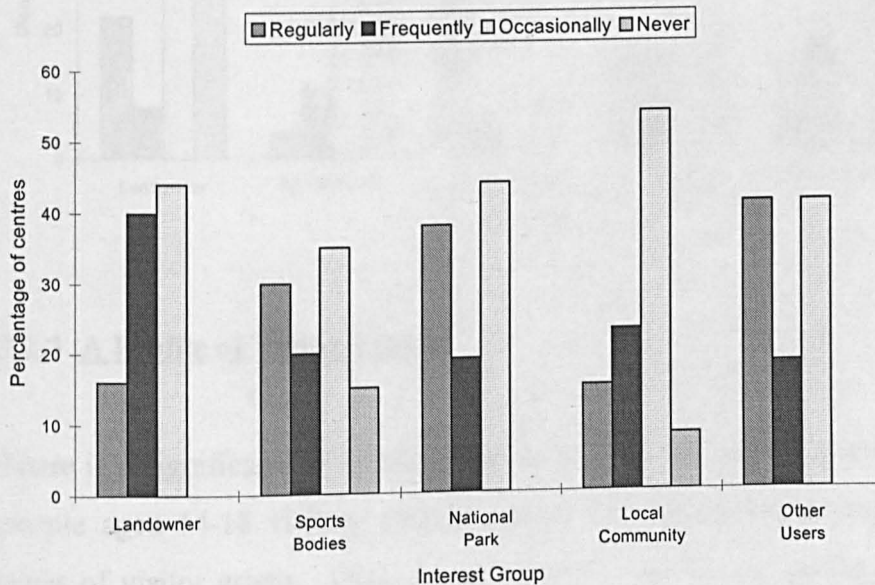


Figure 3.19 Centre links with other interest groups (private sector)

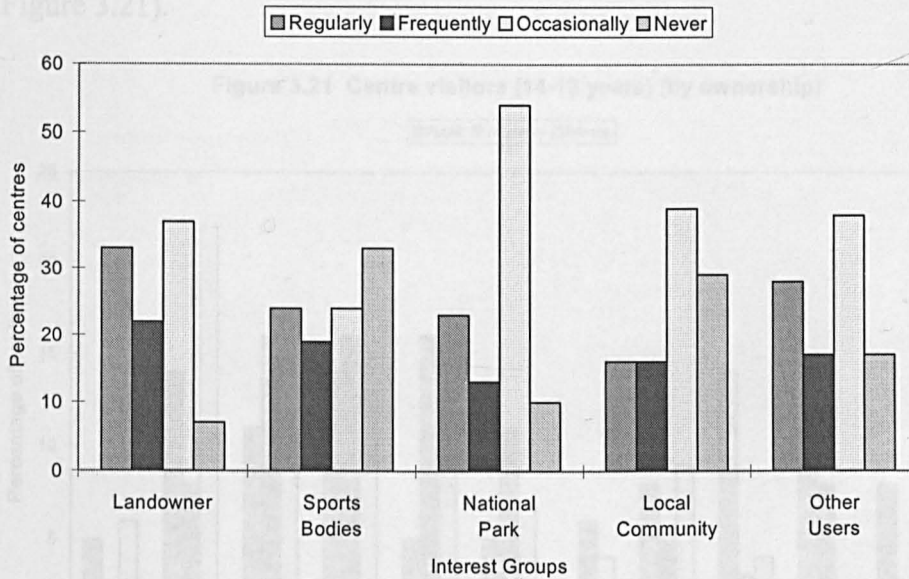
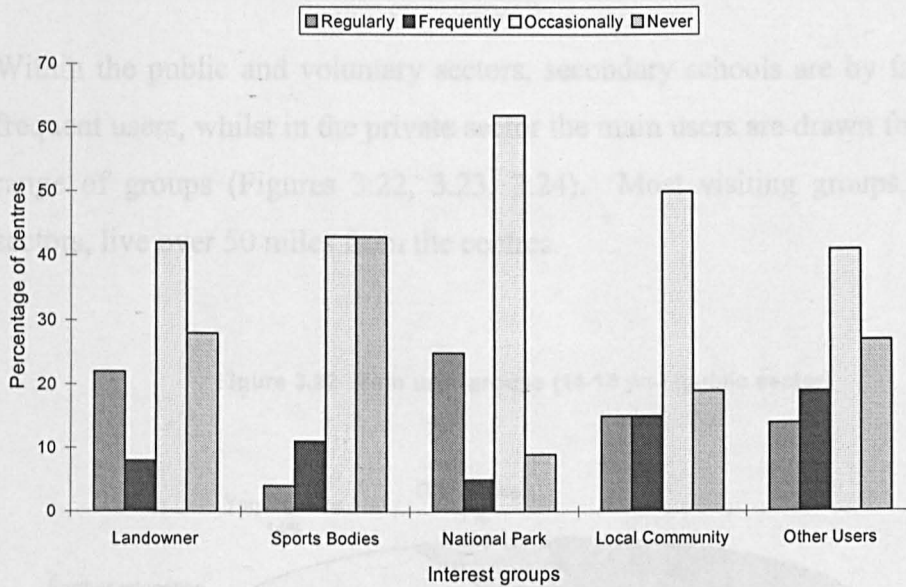


Figure 3.20 Centre links with other groups (voluntary sector)

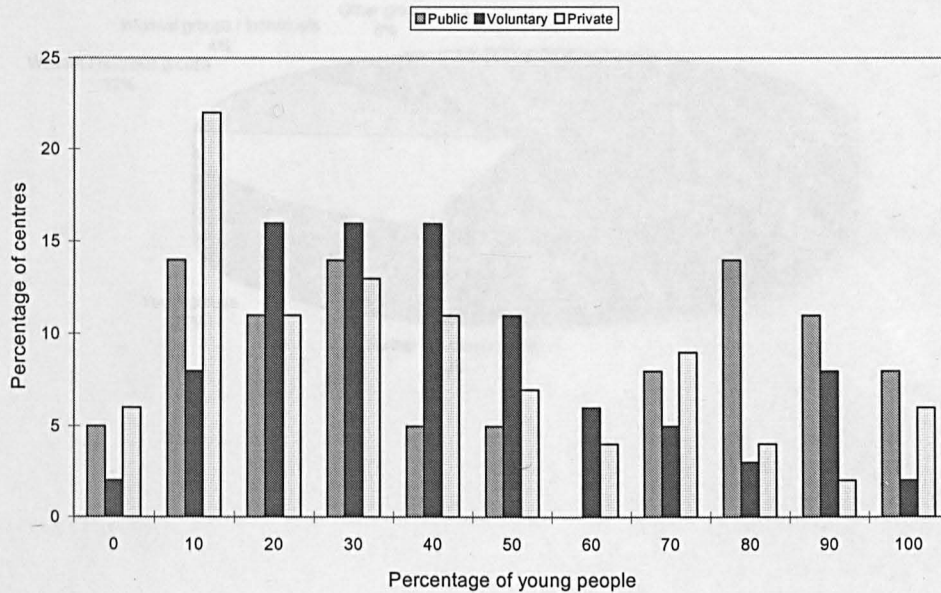


3.2.3 A Profile of Young People

There is a significant difference, between sectors, in both the numbers of young people aged 14-18 visiting centres and in the relative importance of different types of visitor group. Thus, far more centres within the public sector take in

larger numbers of young people compared to the voluntary and private sectors (Figure 3.21).

Figure 3.21 Centre visitors (14-18 years) (by ownership)



Within the public and voluntary sectors, secondary schools are by far the most frequent users, whilst in the private sector the main users are drawn from a wider range of groups (Figures 3.22, 3.23, 3.24). Most visiting groups, across all sectors, live over 50 miles from the centres.

Figure 3.22 Main user groups (14-18 yrs) (public sector)

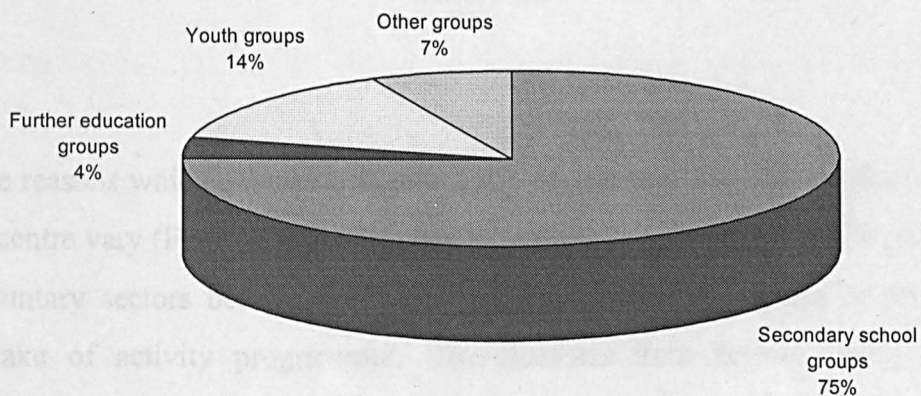


Figure 3.23 Main user groups (14-18 yrs) (voluntary sector)

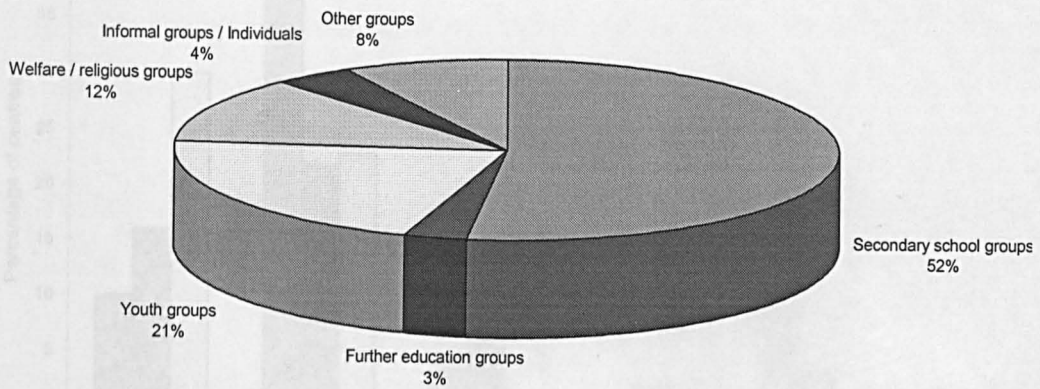
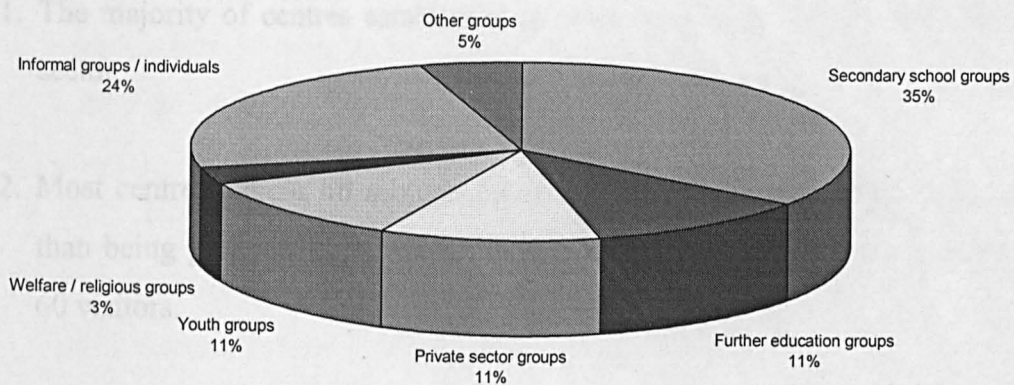
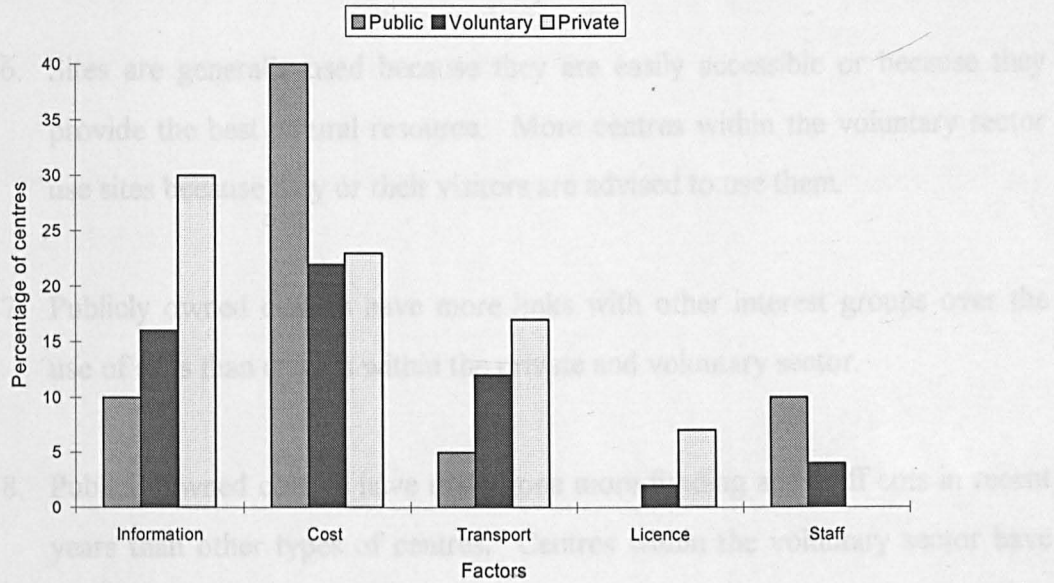


Figure 3.24 Main user groups (14-18 yrs) (private sector)



The reasons which deter or prevent young people from attending different types of centre vary (Figure 3.25). Proportionately more respondents in the public and voluntary sectors believe that cost is the main factor deterring or preventing uptake of activity programmes. Respondents from private sector centres, however, indicated that a lack of information is the main deterrent. More privately owned centres than centres in the other sectors indicated that a lack of transport and licensing restrictions were also important.

Figure 3.25 Factors affecting uptake of activities (by ownership)



3.2.4 Summary

An analysis of centre by ownership shows that,

1. The majority of centres established in recent years are owned by the private sector.
2. Most centres, across all sectors, have been converted from other uses rather than being purpose built and can accommodate, on average, between 20 and 60 visitors.
3. More centres within the private sector provide solely for outdoor pursuits. The outdoor activities undertaken, across all centres, are similar. Walking, canoeing and climbing are the most popular.
4. Private, voluntary and public sector centres are open for most of the year and a large number, in all sectors, are full during the summer season.
5. There is a significant difference, across sectors, in centre facilities. Fewer facilities are available at centres within the voluntary sector, and there is a

greater reliance on external instructors.

6. Sites are generally used because they are easily accessible or because they provide the best natural resource. More centres within the voluntary sector use sites because they or their visitors are advised to use them.
7. Publicly owned centres have more links with other interest groups over the use of sites than centres within the private and voluntary sector.
8. Publicly owned centres have undergone more funding and staff cuts in recent years than other types of centres. Centres within the voluntary sector have seen a wider range of improvements.
9. There is a significant difference in the number of young people, aged 14-18 years, attending centres and in the relative importance of different types of group. Thus, significantly more young people visit public and voluntary sector centres than privately owned centres, and there is a greater emphasis on school and youth groups. Centres within the private sector attract a wider clientele.
10. Proportionately more centres within the public and voluntary sectors than the private sector believe that cost deters or prevents young people from taking up outdoor activity courses. The private sector perceives a lack of information to be the main barrier to participation.

3.3 Analysis of Residential Centres by Park

3.3.1 Structure of the Outdoor Sector

The total number of responding residential centres in each National Park are shown below.

Figure 3.26 Questionnaire returns

National Park	Returns
Peak District	36
Lake District	63
Dartmoor	19
Snowdonia	41
Brecon Beacons	17
North York Moors	12

The questionnaire responses showed that most centres, across all Parks, were opened during the mid 1960s to mid 1980s, although since 1980, the Peak Park, Dartmoor and the Lake District have all experienced a significant growth in provision (22%, 37% and 31% of responding centres, respectively, have opened since this time). No centres appear to have been opened in the Brecon Beacons National Park since 1979. The majority of centres (65%), across all Parks, have been converted from other uses (Figure 3.27) and, since 1980, only 2 centres have been purpose built. Only one out of a sample of 39 centres in Snowdonia has ever been purpose built, compared to 14% of all centres in the Peak Park.

Centres in Dartmoor and the North York Moors appear to be more accessible by public transport than centres in other National Parks, although responses indicated that many centres are not at all accessible.

The number of visitors that can be accommodated at centres across the National Parks is similar, i.e. approximately 50. More centres in the Peak Park have increased their capacity in recent years than in other Parks and significant increases in bed spaces were recorded by 10% of Peak Park centres. None of the centres in Snowdonia reported an increase in bed spaces in the last 10 years.

In each of the National Parks, the voluntary sector owns and manages the largest number of centres, the Youth Hostels' Association having a major share of provision across all designated areas. There is a significant difference, however, in the ratio of public:private:voluntary sector centres (Figure 3.28). In the North York Moors, for example, only one centre (out of 12) belongs to the private sector compared to 8 (out of 19) in Dartmoor. There appear to have been fewer changes in the ownership and management of centres in the Peak Park in recent years, than in centres across other Parks.

Most centres, across all Parks, accommodate both groups and individuals although the number of centres accommodating groups only varies, from 19% of centres in the Lake District, to 53% of centres in Dartmoor.

Figure 3.27 Type of building (individual parks)

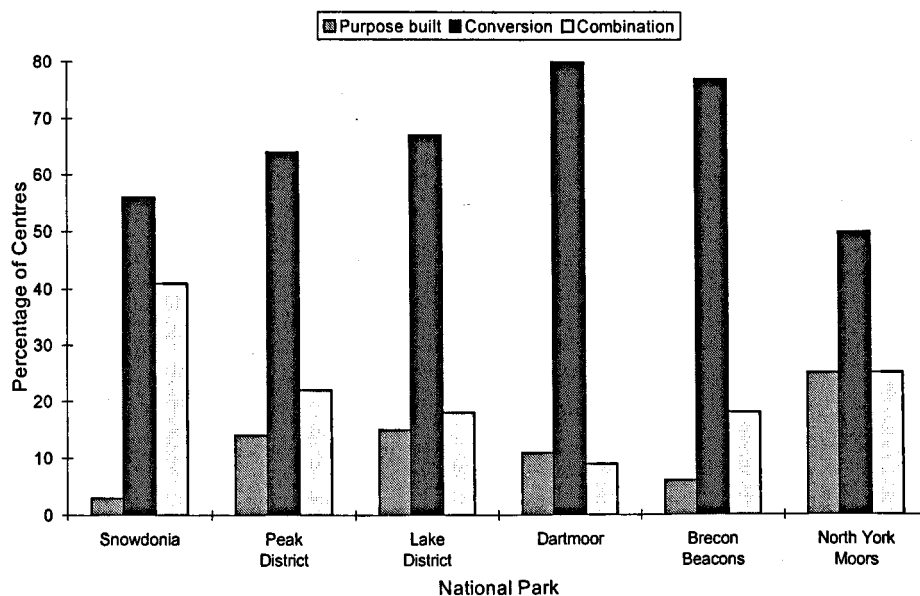
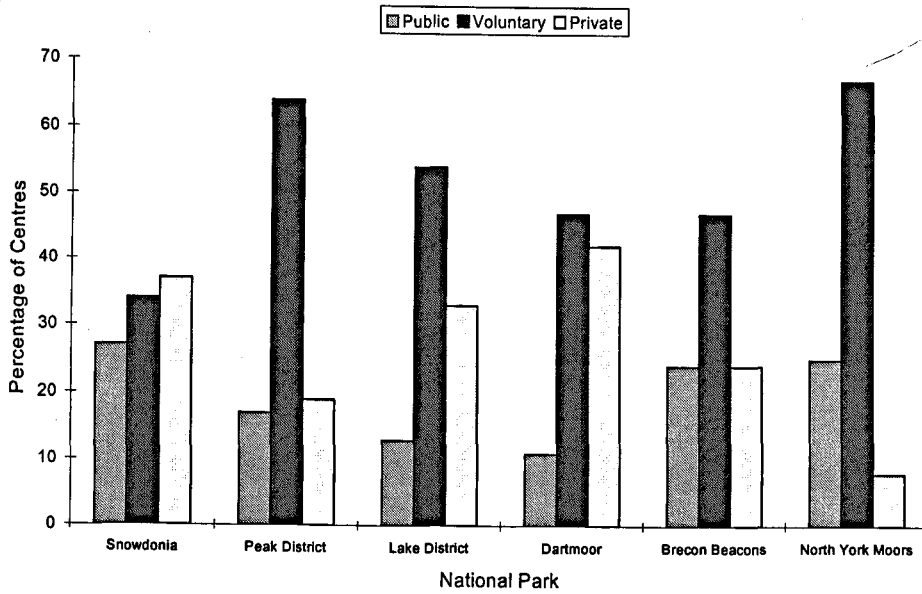


Figure 3.28 Centre ownership (individual parks)



The Lake District has a much higher percentage of centres specialising in outdoor pursuits than in the other National Parks (Figure 3.29). In Dartmoor, for example, only one centre (out of 19) offers outdoor pursuits only. Most centres cater for both outdoor activities and field studies.

Figure 3.29 Centres offering outdoor activities / field studies (individual parks)

	Snowdonia	Peak Park	Lake District	Dartmoor	Brecon Beacons	N.Y. Moors
OA	12	6	27	1	6	3
OA/FS	29	30	36	18	11	9

OA - Outdoor Activities OA/FS - Outdoor Activities / Field Studies

Across the Parks, walking, climbing, canoeing and caving are amongst the most popular outdoor activities. Some activities appear to be more common in some Parks than in others, for example, ghyll scrambling in the Lake District and Snowdonia and letter boxing which is specific to Dartmoor. The extent of these other activities is not known.

Many centres, across the Parks, offer other activities besides outdoor pursuits and field studies. Management training, for example, was recorded at 7 out of the 63 centres in the Lake District. Centres in the Brecon Beacons and North York Moors appear to offer fewer specialist courses.

A wide range of sites are used for activities and a number of sites were recorded several times, in particular, Stanage and the Roaches (in the Peak Park) Tremadog and Cader Idris (in Snowdonia) and Ullswater, Eskdale, Derwentwater, Bassenthwaite, Borrowdale, Ennerdale, Coniston Fell and Lake Coniston (in the Lake District).

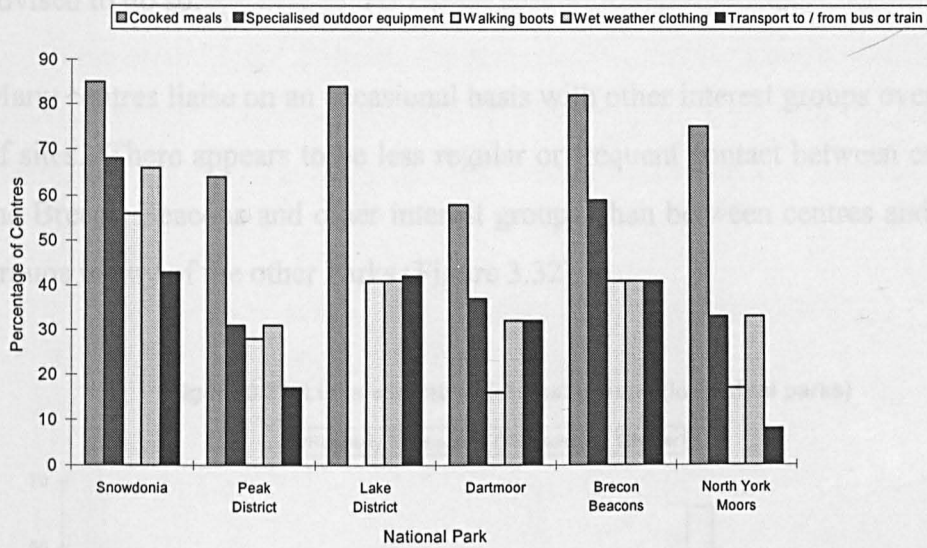
3.3.2 Operation of the Outdoor Sector

The opening periods at centres across all National Parks are similar, although, in the Lake District, Brecon Beacons, and North York Moors, a slightly larger number of centres are closed during January. More centres in the Peak Park have extended their opening season compared to other Parks.

Proportionately more centres have undergone funding cuts in the Brecon Beacons in recent years than in other Parks.

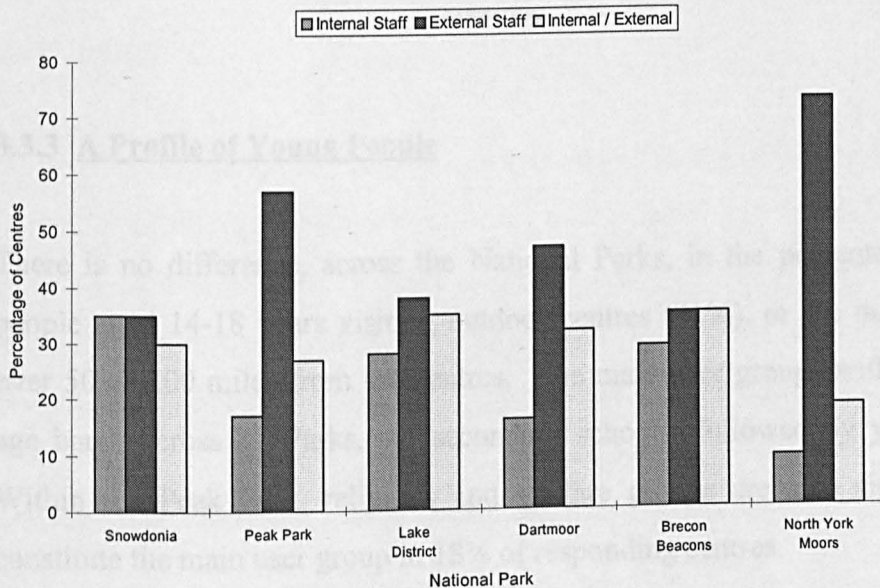
Centre provision varies. Over one half of all the responding centres in Snowdonia, for example, provide cooked meals, specialised equipment for outdoor activities, and wet weather gear. Many centres in Snowdonia can also arrange to collect visitors from bus and train stations. There are fewer facilities at centres within the other Parks (Figure 3.30). More than half of the centres, across all National Parks, provide information on public transport, walking and cycling routes, and recommended activity sites. More information is generally available at centres in the North York Moors, than in other areas.

Figure 3.30 Centre provision (individual parks)



There is quite a difference, across the National Parks, in the ratio of internal to external staff leading outdoor activities. Centres in the Peak District, Dartmoor and the North York Moors rely more heavily on external instructors (Figure 3.31) than the other Parks.

Figure 3.31 Type of instructor (individual parks)

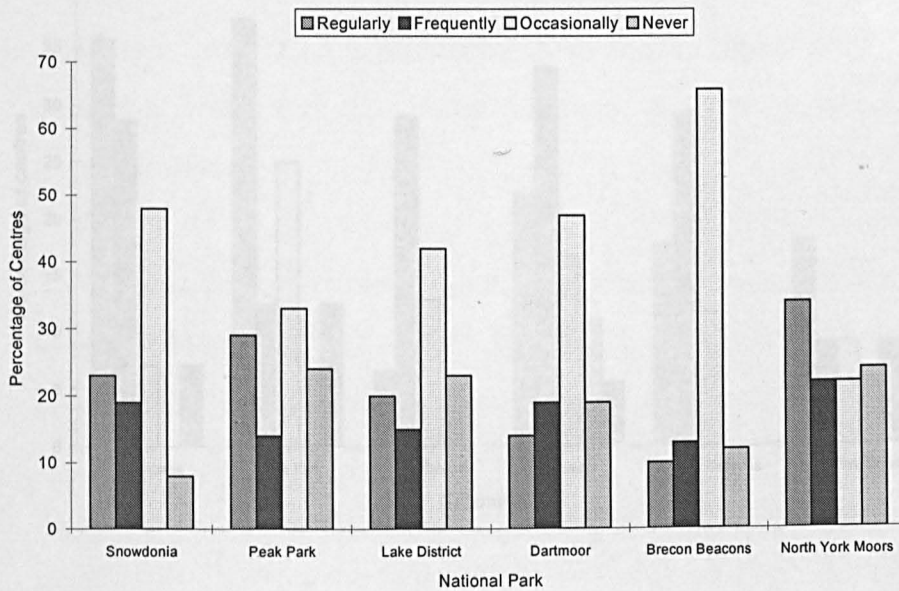


Sites, across all Parks, are used for similar reasons i.e. because they are easily accessible or provide the best natural resource. A higher percentage of centres in the Lake District have exclusive use of sites. Proportionately fewer centres in

Snowdonia and the Peak Park indicated that they used sites because they were advised to do so.

Many centres liaise on an occasional basis with other interest groups over the use of sites. There appears to be less regular or frequent contact between centres in the Brecon Beacons and other interest groups, than between centres and interest groups in any of the other Parks (Figure 3.32).

Figure 3.32 Links with other interest groups (individual parks)



3.3.4 Summary

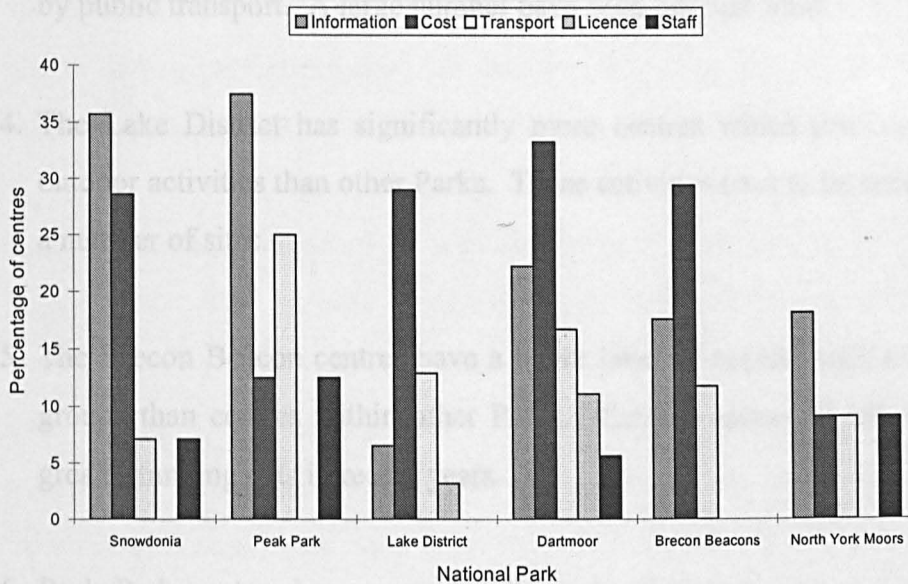
3.3.3 A Profile of Young People

There is no difference, across the National Parks, in the percentage of young people aged 14-18 years visiting outdoor centres (41%), or the numbers living over 50 or 100 miles from the centres. The main user groups within the 14-18 age band, across all Parks, are secondary schools, followed by youth groups. Within the Peak Park, religious and welfare groups are also significant and constitute the main user group in 18% of responding centres.

The factors which deter or prevent young people from visiting the centres are similar across all Parks (Figure 3.33). In the Peak Park, however, significantly more responding centres thought that the lack of uptake was due to a lack of

transport or to a lack of staff than in the other Parks. The cost of activities was rated less important in the Peak Park than in most of the other parks. With the exception of the Lake District, the majority of centres thought that a lack of information was a significant barrier to participation. Only 2 of the responding centres in the Lake District thought that a lack of information was a major factor.

Figure 3.33 Factors affecting uptake of activities (individual parks)



3.3.4 Summary

An analysis of individual Parks shows that many aspects of the outdoor sector are common to all parks, for example centre capacity and the type of outdoor pursuits undertaken. The reasons given for using certain sites are also similar. There is no observable difference across Parks in the number of 14-18 year olds attending the centres, or in the main type of user group within this age band.

Some differences are apparent. In particular,

1. Snowdonia has very few purpose built centres compared to the other Parks, but has, in general, better provision in terms of centre facilities. Activities tend to be concentrated at a number of key sites.

2. Dartmoor has a larger number of private sector centres than other Parks. It relies heavily on external instructors, has a large number of group-only courses, and provides few specialist courses. Its centres are more easily accessible by public transport than those in other Parks.
3. The North York Moors has a predominance of public and voluntary sector centres, and relies heavily on external staff. Many of its centres are accessible by public transport. A large number have been purpose built.
4. The Lake District has significantly more centres which provide solely for outdoor activities than other Parks. These activities tend to be concentrated at a number of sites.
5. The Brecon Beacon centres have a lower level of contact with other interest groups than centres within other Parks. Centres appear to have undergone greater funding cuts in recent years.
6. Peak Park centres have a greater diversity of courses and user groups than other Parks. Centres use large numbers of external staff. Recent years have seen fewer changes in the ownership and management of centres than in the other designated areas. A larger number of centres have increased both their capacity and periods of opening compared to centres in other Parks. Proportionately more centres in the Peak Park, than in other Parks indicated that a lack of transport and centre staff were important factors deterring young people from attending outdoor centres.

3.4 Analysis of Day Centres

3.4.1 Structure of the Outdoor Sector

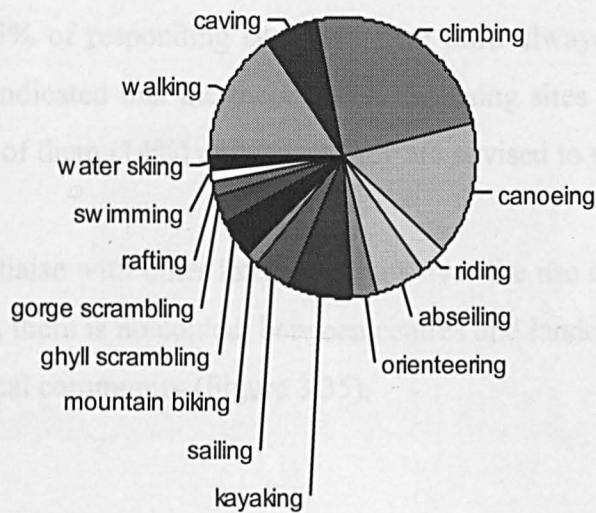
24 centres were identified which offer day courses only. These include freelance instructors who operate from home and offer instruction, usually on an hourly or part day basis, and instructors who operate from hotel or bed and breakfast accommodation. They also include businesses, such as watersports centres, which have a permanent base for outdoor activities, but do not offer visitor accommodation.

The questionnaire responses showed that none of these centres began operation before 1960. The majority were established between the mid 1970s and mid 1990s, including 7 centres which were opened between 1990 and 1994. Of the 12 built centres, 3 have been purpose built. The majority of centres are not very accessible by public transport. Most can accommodate between 40 and 50 day visitors and 4 centres can cater for groups of over 100. Twenty three out of the twenty four centres, belong to, and are managed by, the private sector. Only one centre takes groups only. The majority of centres (18) focus exclusively on outdoor activities and the most popular activity is climbing (recorded by one quarter of all the centres), followed by both walking and canoeing (listed by 10 out of the 24 centres) (Figure 3.34).

3.4.2 Operation of the Outdoor Sector

All of the responding centres are open from March to September. 5 centres are closed in December. A number are fully booked during the summer months particularly July and August.

Figure 3.34 Main Outdoor Activities (Day Centres)



The cost of courses at day centres varies. A watersports centre, for example, may charge approximately £3 per head per hour for canoeing instruction for groups of between 5 to 10 people, whilst a weekend course in mountaineering, run from a youth hostel, could cost approximately £100. Equipment hire costs depend on the type of equipment and group size. Mountain bike hire, for example, typically costs approximately £13 per person per day.

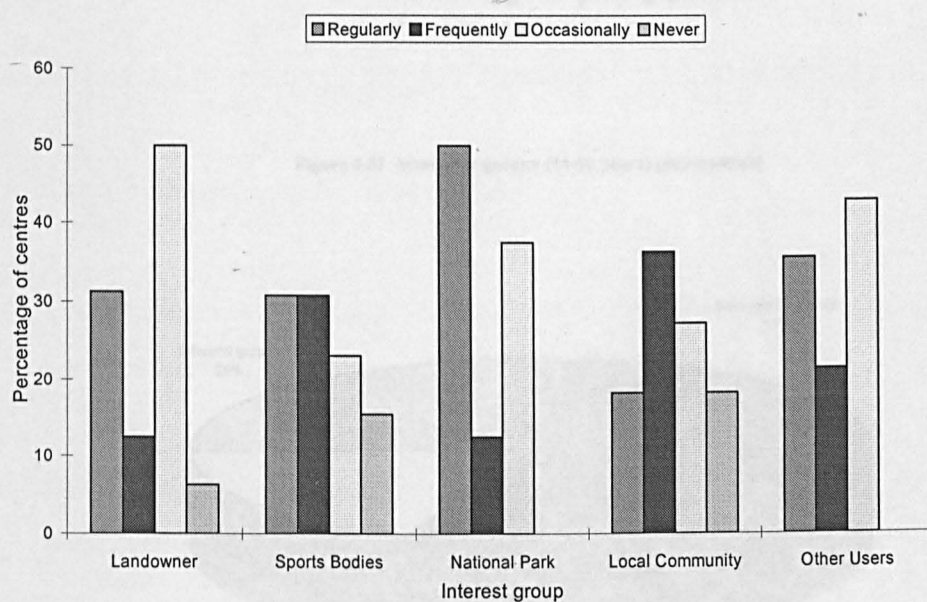
The majority of day centres (17 out of 24) provide specialised equipment for outdoor activities and one third have outdoor clothing. Only 4 centres provide boots. A few can offer meals and can arrange to collect visitors from train and bus stations. Two thirds of centres use their own staff. A large number provide visitors with information on public transport, walking and cycling routes, and recommended activity sites.

According to respondents, some day centres have undergone a number of improvements in recent years, such as the creation of new changing rooms and increased staffing levels. The range of outdoor pursuits offered to clients has also been extended. There have been fewer management training courses, but an increase in technical skills courses.

Questionnaire responses show that the main reasons for using specific sites are because they provide the best resource (89% of responding centres) or are easily accessible (75% of responding centres). One third always use the same sites. Few centres indicated that the main reason for using sites is because they have exclusive use of them (14%) or because they are advised to use them (18%).

Most centres liaise with other interest groups over the use of sites although, in a few instances, there is no contact between centres and landowners, sports bodies, or with the local community (Figure 3.35).

Figure 3.35 Centre links with other interest groups (day centres)



3.4.3 A Profile of Young People

Approximately 26% of all visitors to day centres are aged 14-18 years although, at one third of the responding centres, young people make up 10% or less of visitor groups (Figure 3.36). Within this age band, secondary schools are the main users followed by informal groups (Figure 3.37). Few young people come from within distances of 50 to 100 miles.

Figure 3.36 Centre visitors (14-18 years)
(day centres)

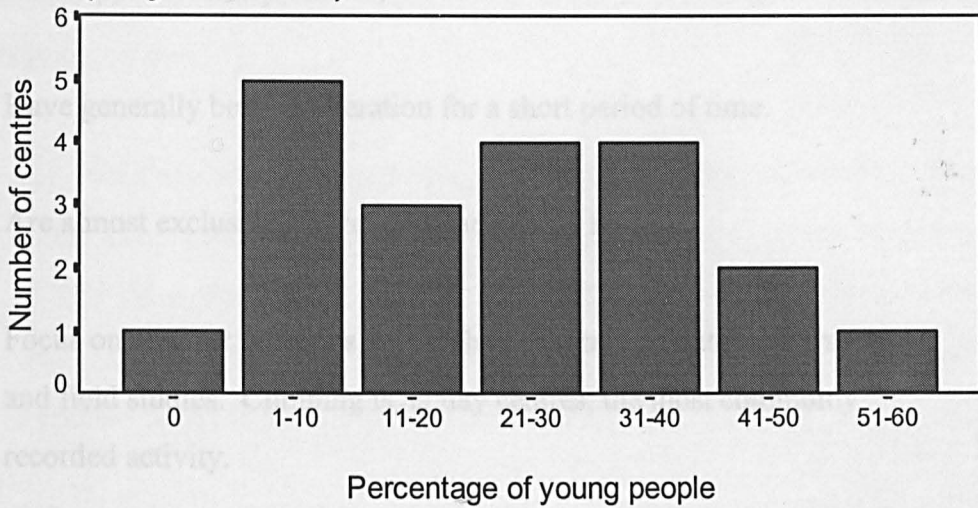
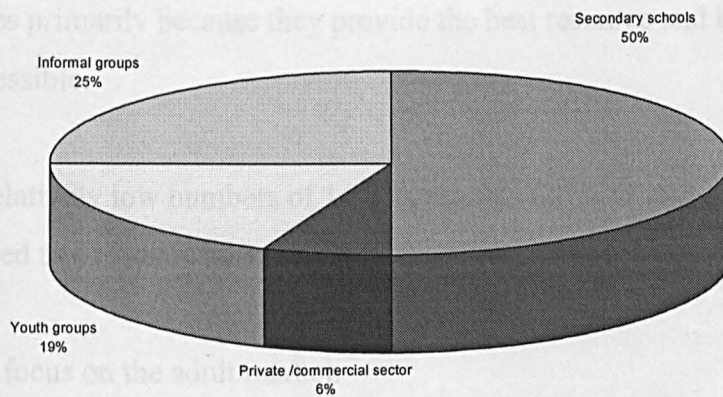


Figure 3.37 Main user groups (14-18 years) (day centres)



The main factors which deter or prevent young people from taking up activity courses are the cost involved (one half of responding centres), followed by a lack of information (7 centres), and a lack of transport (4 centres). Licensing and, not surprisingly, a lack of instruction are considered to be relatively unimportant. Several centres commented that their courses are not targeted at the younger age groups.

3.4.4 Summary

It would appear that day centres,

1. Have generally been in operation for a short period of time.
2. Are almost exclusively owned by the private sector.
3. Focus on outdoor activities, rather than on a mix of outdoor pursuits and field studies. Climbing is, at day centres, the most commonly recorded activity.
4. Have good provision, in terms of specialised equipment for outdoor activities.
5. Use a high percentage of internal staff.
6. Use sites primarily because they provide the best resource and because they are accessible.
7. Have relatively low numbers of 14-18 year olds (26% of visitors per year compared to 41% at residential centres).
8. Tend to focus on the adult market.

3.5 Overall Summary

The analyses have provided a picture of outdoor provision in National Parks which shows that,

1. The Parks are well endowed with an enormous variety of outdoor centres, within which public, private and voluntary sectors are well represented in terms of their share of provision, and that most centres are accessible throughout the year. Groups of young people, especially schools and youth groups, are frequent visitors to these establishments.
2. Centre ownership has a significant bearing on the structure and operation of outdoor centres. The public and voluntary sectors cater for larger numbers of young people than private sector centres. Most of the centres that have opened within the last 10-15 years are privately owned. Centres within the voluntary sector, which has the major share of outdoor provision, have fewer facilities than centres under public and private ownership. Many do not have residential staff.
3. Recent years have seen a significant increase in the number of day centres, the ownership and operation of which are quite different to that of residential provision. The vast majority of day centres are owned by the private sector. Most focus on physical pursuits and on the acquisition of skills. The number of young people taking part in activities from these centres, compared to residential centres, is low.
4. Many centres have seen changes within their outdoor programmes in response to National Curriculum requirements, client demands for different types of activities, and the need to increase centre revenue.
5. The introduction of the National Curriculum has led to a significant increase in the number of field study courses offered by outdoor centres. It has also led to an increase in primary school visits. Funding cuts, particularly to local

education authority centres, have resulted in centre diversification and to a change in the composition of visitor groups. An overall reduction in resources has led to a fall in the number of secondary school groups undertaking outdoor programmes.

6. The majority of activities undertaken from outdoor centres are those which are dependent upon the natural resources of the National Parks. The choice of activity site is largely determined by the quality of the resource and by the accessibility of the site. The extent to which centres liaise with other interest groups over the use of sites varies from centre to centre.

It is intended, in the discussion chapters which follow, to explore some of these issues in more detail. Chapter Four, for example, focuses on centre ownership and the way in which ownership influences both the nature of outdoor provision and the composition of visitor groups. Chapters Five to Seven examine, in turn, the impact of safety reform, educational reform, and planning and environmental policies on opportunities for outdoor activities. Chapter Eight focuses on leisure behaviour, in particular the impact of activities and the extent to which modern lifestyles have impacted on traditional outdoor pursuits.

Each chapter begins by providing a brief introduction to the topic. It then examines, in relation to the study findings, the way in which centres, activities and visitors have been affected. The implications of the study findings are also considered.

CHAPTER FOUR - THE IMPACT OF OUTDOOR ACTIVITY CENTRE OWNERSHIP ON OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUTDOOR ADVENTURE

4.1 Introduction

Outdoor centres are the mainstay of the outdoor activity industry. Centre operators, for example, are the principal providers of activity holidays, which now account for over 12% of holiday trips made every year by UK residents, and outdoor centres are the most commonly used form of accommodation (Leisure Consultants 1992, p.2). Not only do centres act as a base for holiday makers, but they also offer a residential experience for thousands of young people as part of educational and youth curricula programmes. In addition, they provide a venue for a wide range of skills and development training courses. As leisure demands increase in volume and sophistication, so the range of programmes offered by outdoor providers are becoming increasingly diverse and specialised.

Centre ownership is split between public, private and voluntary sector organisations and the range of centres, even within sectors, is vast. (For an explanation of the historical development of state, commercial and voluntary sector involvement in leisure see, for example, Coalter 1988, Henry 1993). These three sectors, according to Clarke (1992), operate with distinct motives and styles in the delivery of leisure services. Given the importance of outdoor centres in catering to such a wide audience, centre ownership can, therefore, play a crucial role in determining the way in which the outdoor activity market develops.

The aim of this chapter is to examine the ways in which ownership affects the structure and operation of outdoor centres. It focuses initially on the similarities, across sectors, in terms of centre capacity, opening season, and range of outdoor activities. It also highlights the differences, such as the type of facilities available, the type of staff employed, and linkages with other site users. In particular, it examines the observed differences in the profile of young visitors

and the recent growth in non-residential provision. The chapter goes on to explore the implications of centre ownership, in terms of the future development of the outdoor industry and the impact on young people's access to outdoor opportunities.

4.2 The Influence of Centre Ownership on the Structure and Operation of Outdoor Centres

The study findings indicate that,

1. Irrespective of ownership, some aspects of outdoor activity centres are common across all sectors

a) Centre Type and Capacity

Questionnaire responses show that the majority of centres, irrespective of ownership, were opened between the mid 1960s and mid 1980s, that most (65%) have been converted from other uses, and that a large number cater for less than 30 visitors at any one time.

The reason for this pattern and scale of development is, in part, historic. The Youth Hostels' Association, for example, has sought, since the 1930s, to provide a network of hostels throughout England and Wales and, to this end, has acquired probably the largest range of buildings, from redundant schools and chapels to Regency houses, in the voluntary sector. The Education Act 1944, which gave local education authorities the duty to secure provision for recreational facilities, led to the widespread acquisition of properties. Many local education authority centres comprise former farmhouses and country house estates which were bought during the 1960s, when this type of property was relatively cheap, and were adapted for educational use. There also exist innumerable cottages, barn conversions, and other properties, which belong to smaller organisations, such as climbing and caving clubs. Many of these centres have been in use for over 20 years as a base for outdoor activities. The 1980s saw a significant rise in privately owned centres. Of the 25 centres opened since 1985, for example, 18

belong to the private sector. The change, during this period, in the balance between public and private sector provision was probably due, in part, to cut-backs in local government spending and to a political and economic climate which encouraged private enterprise (see, for example, Savage 1990).

The development of outdoor centres has also been influenced by planning policies (see Chapter Seven for a full discussion of the impact of planning policies on opportunities for outdoor adventure). Government guidance on rural land use planning has encouraged opportunities for rural diversification, including the conversion of redundant farm buildings, and has led to the establishment of a number of centres in this way. The development of new outdoor centres and the extension of existing buildings has often been discouraged on social and environmental grounds. The Gwynedd Structure Plan, for example, which includes the Snowdonia National Park, states that,

'The establishment of further outdoor pursuits centres and an increase in the number of bed spaces in existing centres...which would demonstrably increase pressure on the Park's natural resources and environment will not be permitted'

(Gwynedd County Council 1993, p.10).

b) Opening Season

Questionnaire responses also show that the majority of centres, across all sectors, are open all year round and many of those which used to close over the winter months have extended their opening period. Thirty three out of the 188 responding centres indicated that their opening times and opening season have been extended in recent years. A comparison of the results with earlier findings (Dartington Amenity Research Trust 1980) shows the significance of these changes (Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1 Percentage of centres open at different times of the year (1980, 1997)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1997	80	90	97	100	98	98	98	95	99	98	89	83
1980 ¹	72	76	92	98	99	99	99	98	98	91	80	72

(¹ Dartington Amenity Research Trust 1980)

Centre managers, when interviewed, suggested a number of reasons for this trend. In particular,

1. There has been an increase in weekend and short break holidays, which, as Clark (1994) has indicated, are showing an annual growth rate of 15-20% (p.203). There has also been a general extension of the traditional summer vacation period.
2. Many centres are actively trying to increase occupancy levels, and ultimately revenue, by offering courses to a wider clientele over a longer season. Some local education authority centres, for example, are now open at weekends and during the summer holidays to cater for non-educational groups.
3. There have been significant improvements in all-weather clothing which has enabled people to undertake outdoor activities in all kinds of weather.
4. There has been an increase in specialist skills courses many of which, for example ice climbing, are designed to be undertaken in winter weather conditions.

The above trends mean that many centres are now full for a number of weeks of the year. Over one third of centres, for example, across all sectors, indicated that they are full in May, June and July and, compared to the Dartington Amenity Research Trust study, many more centres are over subscribed throughout the year (Figure 4.2). The general demand for places on outdoor programmes appears,

therefore, to be exceeding the supply.

Figure 4.2 Percentage of centres full at different times of the year (1980, 1997)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1997	3	9	15	26	53	60	55	30	23	24	10	4
1980 ¹	8	8	14	23	27	37	54	45	19	16	9	8

(¹Dartington Amenity Research Trust 1980)

c) Range of Activities

Irrespective of ownership, outdoor adventurous activities are a major component of programmes undertaken from outdoor centres. Over one fifth of centres in each of the public, voluntary and private sectors provide outdoor activity courses only, and, across all types of centre, the most popular activities include walking, climbing, canoeing, cycling and riding. There appears to have been little change in the popularity of these activities over the last 20 years (Dartington Amenity Research Trust 1980).

Outdoor activities, across all types of centre, make extensive use of the National Parks' natural resources. Indeed, two thirds of centres, across all sectors, use sites primarily because they provide the best natural resource. The gritstone edges of the Peak District, for example, provide climbing sites for groups and individuals alike. Equally, the open moorlands of Dartmoor and the North York Moors offer opportunities for all kinds of expedition from Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme to Mountain Leadership.

2. A number of operational differences exist between centres owned by the public, private and voluntary sectors

a) Facilities and Staff

There is a marked difference, across public, private and voluntary sector centres, in the type of facilities available, and in the type of staff leading outdoor activities. The results from the questionnaire survey have shown that, whilst over two thirds

of all centres have catering facilities, less than one third of centres in the voluntary sector provide outdoor gear, although there have been overall improvements in recent years (Figure 4.3). Other changes are also underway. Youth hostel visitors, for example, have been traditionally required, in the spirit of the organisation's aims to provide simple and budget accommodation, to undertake domestic chores and to prepare their own meals. Faced with demands for better service and better quality provision, however, such policies are being abandoned (Youth Hostels' Association - personal communication 02.07.96).

Figure 4.3 Percentage of centres offering outdoor gear

	Wet weather clothing	Wet weather footwear	Outdoor kit
1997	43	38	47
1994 ¹	42	26	51
1980 ²	26	14	36

¹Countryside Commission (1994)

²Dartington Amenity Research Trust (1980)

Of the responding centres in the voluntary sector, 60% rely solely on external instructors, compared to only 22% and 33% of centres in the public and private sectors respectively. Irrespective of centre ownership, staffing levels, at centres which employ their own staff, tend to be low, typically 1-2 professional full time instructors, with a similar number of part time employees. Whilst approximately one half of all privately owned and publicly owned centres can arrange to collect visitors from bus and train stations, only one fifth of voluntary sector centres can offer this service. On average, more centres in the voluntary sector are closed during the winter months.

Centre interviews suggest that the above differences are due to a number of factors:

1. Many voluntary sector centres provide accommodation only, and rely on visiting groups to be self sufficient.
2. The majority of publicly owned centres belong to local authorities and, because environmental education and field studies are a major component of their outdoor programmes, tend to have a core supply of resident teachers and outdoor instructors. Equipment is generally provided by the local authority, in some cases on a shared basis with other local education authority centres. Many local authorities have their own centre transport.
3. More centres in the private sector offer specialist skills training, such as climbing courses, which require intensive instruction and specialised equipment. Many privately owned centres offer to collect clients travelling by public transport so as not to lose business.

b) Interaction with other Interest Groups

Although similar numbers of questionnaire respondents, across all sectors, have regular to occasional contact with other interest groups using the same activity sites, the responses show that far more centres within the private and voluntary sector (19%, 25% respectively) never liaise with other groups, compared to only 5% of centres in the public sector. Nearly one third of centres in the voluntary sector have no contact with landowners and nearly one half have no links with the Sports Governing Bodies.

Interviews with centre managers suggest that links are weakest where a) there are no resident staff and, therefore, no regular point of contact, b) groups are making a one-off or infrequent visit to the area, c) centre staff do not belong to professional associations, such as the Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres, and d) centres or visiting groups are unaware of the potential impact of activities on either the site or other users.

3) *The profile of young people visiting private, public and voluntary sector centres varies*

Whilst most centres indicated, in the questionnaire survey, that a proportion of their visitors, in any one year, are aged 14-18, the average intake of young people, across public, voluntary and private sector centres varies (47%, 42%, 36% respectively). In addition, more centres within the public sector accommodate more young people compared to other visitor groups than centres in private and voluntary sector ownership. User groups also differ across sectors. Thus although secondary school groups are the main user group, in the 14-18 age band, the prominence of other users has been shown to vary across sectors. Privately owned centres, for example, attract more groups from the commercial sector and have more informal group visits.

The extent to which young people visit outdoor centres is, in part, dependent upon the aims and objectives of the organisation. Many centres owned by the public and voluntary sector, for example, have explicit policies, expressed through local authority entitlement curricula or constitutional rules, which refer to residential experiences. The private sector, free from these constraints, has tended to encourage a wider clientele in order, according to interviewees, to reduce its dependence on specific visitor groups and to focus on more lucrative courses, such as management training.

Other factors play a part. The questionnaire, for example, highlighted differences, across sectors, in the reasons thought to deter or prevent young people from taking up outdoor courses. Twice as many public sector centres indicated that cost was one of the main factors preventing or deterring young people from participating in outdoor courses, than other types of centre. This is somewhat surprising, given the relatively low course fees at local education authority centres, the high number of subsidised places (up to one third at some centres) and the expressed view, by many managers, that schools and parents would be prepared to accept an increase in fees. Almost one third of all centres in the private sector (compared to only 10% of public sector centres) suggested

that a lack of information contributed to lower levels of attendance in young people. This is not unexpected, given that, a) many privately owned centres do not actively target young people, and b) there are fewer formal associations between this sector and its users compared, for example, to schools and local education authority centres.

4. Recent years have seen an expansion in privately owned non-residential provision

The study findings suggest that, in recent years, there has been a substantial increase in day centres i.e. where instruction is normally provided on an hourly basis and accommodation arranged by the participants themselves. Alternatively, some operators use a day base, such as a water sports or cycle hire centre, from which equipment can be hired and instruction provided. Some operators make separate accommodation arrangements for clients.

The questionnaire returns indicate that, since the mid 1970s, at least 24 non-residential centres have been established in the National Parks, 7 of which were opened between 1990 and 1994. 23 out of the 24 responding centres are owned by the private sector. Given the small number of non residential centres identified in the study, it is difficult to determine the significance of this increase in day provision. The growth in independent operators has, however, been noted by other authors (see, for example, Centre for Leisure Research 1995, Lake District National Park Authority 1997) and membership of professional bodies, such as the Association of Mountain Instructors has risen, in recent years, to record levels (Association of Mountain Instructors - personal communication 19.03.98.).

Discussions with day centre owners suggest that the rise in day centres is due to,

- 1) An increased demand from,

- a) Schools and youth groups seeking short sessions in different outdoor pursuits as a part of residential programmes.
 - b) Businesses offering their employees management training through outdoor activities. It is estimated, for example, that 32% of the Times Top 1000 companies engage in outdoor management development (Banks 1995).
 - c) Outdoor sector employees being required, in the wake of safety legislation, to expand their technical skills and obtain appropriate qualifications (see also Chapter Five).
 - d) Individuals wanting a 'taste' of different types of activity, without committing themselves to a residential course, or wishing to develop further their skills in particular sports. Recent years, for example, have seen the expansion in 'skilled consumption' i.e. the search for more stimulating and challenging forms of leisure (Richards 1996). This helps to explain the growth in activities such as climbing which are based on technical skills. The majority of independent operators have, themselves, specialised in such skills-based activities, can offer one-to-one instruction, and can arrange to meet clients on site. This enables them to provide exactly the sort of intensive, short lived, 'sound bite' experience that people seem to want. The questionnaire responses show that 78% of all day centres cater for outdoor pursuits only (compared to only 29% of residential centres). Climbing is the most popular activity. Over 70% of day centres provide specialised equipment, and nearly 90% use specific sites because they provide the best resource. Many independent operators indicated that they were willing to travel considerable distances across the National Parks to reach technically suitable sites although, given the time constraints of short courses, site access is also an important consideration.
- 2) The proliferation in recreational facilities such as cycle networks and orienteering trails, to which day centres, especially those hiring out equipment have been quick to respond. The Countryside Commission, for example, in A

Living Landscape. Our Strategy for the Next 10 Years has pledged its commitment to the promotion of sustainable leisure activities in the countryside through measures such as the designation of 'quiet roads' to give priority to walkers, cyclists and horse riders (Countryside Commission 1996). Forest Enterprise, as part of its recreation policy, encourages the development of facilities for orienteering, horse riding and cycling in its woodlands (Forest Enterprise 1994). The Environmental Impact of Leisure Activities refers to the potential use of disused and redundant railway tracks as a potential recreational resource (House of Commons' Environment Committee 1995).

3) A glut of outdoor activity instructors as a result of increased training opportunities and changes within the outdoor industry. There has been a growing interest in vocational and academic courses, especially at higher education level, leading to careers in the outdoor industry. These courses offer a wide range of qualifications from Sports Governing Body Awards and National Vocational Qualifications in Adventurous Outdoor Activities, Outdoor Education and Outdoor Training, to undergraduate and post graduate degrees in sport and leisure related fields, to teaching qualifications which offer specialisations in outdoor education (Lewis 1995). According to interviewees, the low pay and seasonal nature of work at many residential centres has prompted some staff to become freelance or to set up day centres as a more flexible, lucrative and independent alternative. Low overheads means that day centres can offer competitive prices. A lack of commitment to specific groups means they are also more able to cope with the unpredictability of the leisure market. All of the operators interviewed suggested that their businesses were booming.

5. *There is a significant difference in the profile of young people undertaking outdoor activities at residential centres compared to non-residential centres*

The questionnaire survey shows that approximately 26% of all visitors to day centres are aged 14-18 and, at one third of centres, young people make up 10% or less of visitor groups. Attendance rates are, therefore, much lower than at residential centres where, on average, 41% of all visitors are within this age band.

Even the private residential sector attracts a significantly higher proportion of young people (36%) than privately owned day centres. One quarter of the young people using non-residential provision comprise informal groups and, compared to residential centres, far fewer groups, aged 14-18, live within a 50 mile radius of the centre.

Questionnaire comments reveal that some day centre operators prefer to work with adult groups rather than young people. One operator had catered for young people in the past but had found some groups noisy and 'difficult to deal with'. In the discussions with day centre operators, a common complaint was that, in operating short courses, often for no longer than 2-3 hours, it is not easy, 1) to discuss the group's (or group leader's) aims and objectives in advance of the course, 2) to lay down any ground rules on participant behaviour, and 3) to discuss the role of the group leader.

Some day centre managers have not attempted to target young people, believing that local education authority centres have more expertise in dealing with younger age groups and can offer more appropriate facilities. It is, however, not uncommon for residential centres to employ ex-employees as freelance instructors. Importantly, the majority of day centres charge commercial rates only. Given that cost is seen by over one quarter of questionnaire respondents as a significant factor determining or preventing young people from taking up outdoor courses, day centre rates may well be leading to the exclusion of some groups of young people.

Many day centres advertise their services locally and also rely, for business, on the recommendation of clients and other centres which may be fully booked. As the majority of day centres appear to be owned and run by one, or at the most two individuals, time spent on market research and advertising has to be balanced against time lost on outdoor activities.

4.3 The Implications of Centre Ownership - Demand, Supply and the Residential Experience

The preceding sections have shown the extent to which centre ownership has affected the structure and operation of outdoor centres, and the profile of young visitor groups. The pattern of development which is beginning to emerge has, it will be seen, a number of implications. All sectors, for example, are struggling to maintain ageing and inadequate centre provision. Private sector provision appears to be expanding rapidly and to be posing a threat to young people's involvement in outdoor activities. The growth of day centres raises issues about the loss of the residential experience.

1. A number of factors relating to the structure and operation of outdoor centres, some of which are common across all sectors, are affecting young people's opportunities to participate in outdoor activities

a) Building Stock

The questionnaire survey has shown that the vast majority of outdoor centres were established over 20 years ago and have been refurbished and extended over the years to meet modern-day demands. According to interviewees, however, the age and condition of many buildings still create problems. Some centres have not been modernised. Some still have dormitory accommodation, no central heating, and no communal facilities. Building repair and refurbishment can be expensive. Many buildings are listed and renovation costs even higher. One youth hostel is currently undergoing a £100,000 renovation programme without extending its overall capacity. A number of hostels are being closed nation-wide, as part of the Youth Hostels' Association's programme to rationalise its current provision, although it should be added that only one hostel was identified, in the Snowdonia National Park, which had been closed for this reason. Many outdoor centres have extensive grounds which can be used for on-site activities but are, none the less, expensive to maintain. Managers expressed frustration at the large amounts of money required for building maintenance, which often leads to reduced resources in other areas, such as staffing and outdoor equipment. Whilst

some visiting groups are content with basic levels of provision, often at lower costs, others will seek out centres which offer better quality accommodation and facilities.

In instances where planning permission is sought to convert redundant buildings into activity centres, or to extend existing centres, the scope is sometimes limited by space, cost and planning restrictions (see also Chapter Seven). The inability to extend centres necessarily imposes limits on visitor numbers. Indeed, at many centres, improvements such as the creation of more family and private rooms, has led to a reduction in overall capacity. Some organisations, out of preference or policy, have kept centres small and restricted the intake of visiting groups in order to retain a more homely and intimate atmosphere. According to some centre managers, this is thought to benefit especially those young people coming from deprived family backgrounds, and to make it easier for all pupils to get to know each other and centre staff. Other centres, which cater for larger numbers, often on the grounds of proportionately lower overheads, tend to be run on a less personal basis and offer activities which require less intensive instruction.

b) *Outdoor Equipment*

All outdoor activities require some kind of outdoor equipment, be it suitable clothing or protective footwear, or gear such as climbing ropes, caving ladders, bicycles or canoes. The questionnaire survey shows however that, although compared to 20 years ago, there have been some improvements in facilities, many centres, especially within the voluntary sector, have little provision. There are a number of consequences. Not only does the availability of outdoor gear determine the type of activities undertaken (centre managers acknowledge, for example, that many more groups take part in activities such as fell walking and orienteering, for which equipment may be more readily available, more easily improvised, or cheaper to provide than for other pursuits, such as water sports), but also, if outdoor gear is not provided, parents may not be willing or able to buy it. As the Countryside Commission (1994) points out, the availability of even the most basic items, such as wellington boots, may be an important feature in the uptake of activities and young people from urban areas may be less likely

to have suitable outdoor gear. Considerably fewer day centres provide clothing (29%) and boots (17%) compared to residential centres (43%, 38% respectively).

c) *Outdoor Staff*

A bewildering mix of people head outdoor courses, from residential to non-residential staff, full to part time staff, seasonal to all year round staff, and teachers to outdoor instructors and, according to interviewees, their range of qualifications and experience is equally varied. Some staff have teaching qualifications, others have Sports Governing Body Award qualifications. A number are familiar with the area, others are just committed and keen. Over one third of all outdoor centres are dependent upon group leaders and freelance instructors to lead activities. Questionnaire responses show that, in the voluntary sector, 60% of centres depend upon external instructors.

It is widely acknowledged that the availability of instructors is a crucial factor in enabling young people to take up certain types of activity. The British Mountaineering Council, for example, receives a significant number of calls each year from young people who would like to take up climbing but are under 18 and not allowed to join local climbing clubs, or have no climbing contacts. Such young people are often directed to indoor climbing walls, of which there are now over 400 in the UK but, as the Council acknowledges, are really no substitute for the outdoor experience (British Mountaineering Council - personal communication 07.06.96.). Research by Hunt (1989), has shown that a lack of suitably trained, qualified and committed youth leaders can affect young people's access to outdoor opportunities. In view of these difficulties, it would seem even more important that young people have access to centre staff.

The fact that a significant number of centres, especially in the voluntary and private sector are unmanned, raises issues about the behaviour of unsupervised groups. According to the Lake District National Park Authority, for example, *'use through a properly staffed centre, whose personnel both know the area and provide a point of contact, is preferable to casual group visits'* (Lake District

Special Planning Board 1986, p.6). Similarly, the Snowdonia National Park Authority argues that *'fewer problems arise with groups from wardened residential centres than groups from unmanned centres or on day visits'* (Snowdonia National Park Authority 1986, p.43). It has already been seen that staffed centres tend to have better links with other interest groups and, as Elson (1995) shows, management of sites through liaison, negotiation and mediation can reduce the risk of potential conflict (see also Chapter 8).

2. *Outdoor activities, across all sectors, are largely based on the special qualities of the Parks*

The second National Park purpose, as set out in Section 61 of the Environment Act 1995 Part III National Parks, is *'to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities (of the Parks) by the public'* (Her Majesty's Government 1995). Although Government guidance does not define *'special qualities'*, it makes clear that,

'particular emphasis should be placed on identifying those qualities associated with their wide open spaces, and the wildness and tranquillity which are to be found within them'

(Department of the Environment 1996, p.3).

The study shows the extent to which, across all sectors, these special qualities are both valued and used. Thus,

1. In acknowledgement that the Parks provide an exceptional location for outdoor activities and, for many visitors, a complete contrast to their home environments, many groups, according to interviewees, choose to visit centres in these areas when there may be alternatives closer to home.
2. Many pursuits make use of the Park's natural resources either directly, i.e. as activity sites, or as a backdrop for activities. Indeed many questionnaire respondents indicated that sites are used because they provide the best

resource or because the surroundings provide a unique setting for such activities.

3. Many activities utilise the open and wild nature of these upland areas. The questionnaire survey shows, for example, that irrespective of centre ownership, mountaineering activities such as hill walking and climbing are amongst the most popular activities undertaken from outdoor centres and that large numbers of young people take part in expeditions each year.
4. The solitude and tranquillity afforded by such wild places is regarded as a significant component of the outdoor experience. A number of managers expressed the view that exposure to these environments can add a spiritual and emotional dimension to outdoor activities which is difficult to replicate elsewhere.

Given the obvious importance of these areas to so many visitors, it is right that the Government should encourage National Park Authorities to '*promote the widest range of opportunities for recreation*' (Department of the Environment 1996). Whatever the controversy over new and noisy forms of active sport and recreation (see, for example, Council for National Parks 1994), the outdoor sector continues to support a wide range of traditional activities which can conform to the purposes laid down in the Environment Act 1995.

It is important, however, that the pressures caused by the increasing diversity of sport and recreational activities, are reduced. As Hunt (1989) and others have shown, it is such pressures which often threaten young people's opportunities to participate in outdoor adventure. Sidaway (1996) has examined aspects of conflict at site level and shown that effective communication can assist in conflict resolution even when differences in interest group ideology exist. As the questionnaire findings from this study show, however, there is a significant difference, between sectors, in the extent of centre links with other interest groups over the use of sites. Local education authority centres, for example, have much better links, across all user groups, than residential centres

owned by the private and voluntary sectors. This may reflect the fact that local authority centres often have a core of permanent staff, a professional interest in environmental education, a clientele that includes a large number of return visitors, and are usually well represented, at professional and community level, in discussion groups. Even day centres are more likely to liaise with other interest groups than the majority of residential centres (Figure 4.4), perhaps because instructors tend to live locally and focus on skills training.

Figure 4.4 Percentage of day and residential centres liaising regularly or frequently with other interest groups

<u>Interest Group</u>	<u>Day Centres</u>	<u>Residential Centres</u>
Landowner	22	22
Sports Governing Body	31	15
National Park Authority	32	19
Local Community	27	16

Given the vast number of organisations within the outdoor industry (Higgins 1997), it is, perhaps, not surprising that the general level of communication between interest groups is poor.

3. *The growth in private sector outdoor provision has implications for the youth market*

Chapter One outlined the changes currently taking place within leisure. Thus leisure choices are expanding as a result of increased spending power and more flexible leisure time. Active sport and recreation are increasing in popularity. There has been a shift from club-based to independent activities, an increased emphasis on the quality of experience, and a growing desire for new recreational experiences. The availability of all-weather clothing and the trend for short break holidays is leading to year-round demand for outdoor provision. The growth in demand, as the questionnaire returns have shown, is reflected in the increased occupancy rates at outdoor centres, across all sectors, and in the number of

centres extending their opening season. Many residential centres are stretched to capacity for several months of the year.

Outdoor courses are becoming increasingly diverse in volume and specialised in content and, in some cases, moving away from outdoor pursuits per se. There is evidence from the study to show that public and voluntary sector centres are widening their client and activity base. Some local education authority centres which used to provide exclusively for school groups are now catering for family groups at weekends. One organisation, which used to run country guest houses solely for rambling holidays, has diversified into a host of special interest breaks from painting to murder mystery weekends. This growth in special interest programmes is, interviewees suggest, becoming widespread.

Recent years have seen a growth in private sector provision and especially in privately owned day centres. Day centre operators, by offering a range of tailor made, intensive, and skills based activities, have been able to find a toe hold in the activity business and, it appears, are becoming an increasingly important force within the outdoor sector. There is some evidence, for example, of a structure developing within the non-residential sector. According to day centre interviewees, some operators sub-contract work, some share administrative services and use the same advertising outlets (often local retailers), others are working together to develop a code of good practice. Many freelancers have trained and worked together before setting up their own businesses and there is, therefore, a degree of co-operation and contact between them which may be unusual in other business environments.

The growth in private sector provision is having a significant impact on young people's opportunities for outdoor activities. It has been seen, for example, that the proportion of young people attending private sector centres, be they residential or day centres, is significantly lower than those attending centres owned by public and voluntary sector organisations. The private sector has often focused on programmes for the over 18s, out of choice and profit motive, and has neither targeted the younger age groups nor offered concessionary rates.

4. This pattern of development looks set to continue

A number of sources have predicted a continued growth in the outdoor activity industry, the pattern of which looks likely to reflect current trends.

Leisure Consultants (1992), for example, forecast an increase in the activity holiday business and continuing specialisation and diversification:

'Our survey of the providers of activity holidays shows that almost any kind of specialist facility, capable of providing a leisure activity of some kind to a small group of people, can form the basis of an activity holiday' (p. 69).

The English Tourist Board predicts that the growth in the holiday business will be due, in part, to increasing demand for activity holidays from overseas visitors. At present, although 1 in 7 of all holiday trips taken in the UK are taken from visitors from overseas, foreign tourists make up less than 10% of user groups on organised UK activity holidays (Beioley 1996, p. 32).

The continued interest in outdoor training within the corporate sector, and the general quest for healthier lifestyles, it is argued, will encourage centres to look increasingly to attract corporate and adult markets (Clark 1994).

According to Collins (1997), the number of people employed in the outdoor industry is approaching 80,000 and growing at a rate of 7.1% per annum (p.10).

The study findings tend to reinforce these predictions. Thus,

1. A number of centres, especially day centres, have been opened in recent years. Many have experienced an increased demand for outdoor courses, and most centre managers, when interviewed, were cautiously optimistic about future growth. (It should perhaps be added that the questionnaire survey was carried out in the months prior to the 1997 general election. Some managers thought that if the Labour Party was elected, greater priority would be given to

education, including outdoor education).

2. The Tourist Boards appear keen to promote outdoor activity holidays. The Cumbria Tourist Board, for example, has stated that '*There are outstanding opportunities for activity holidays in Cumbria either independently or on organised courses or package holidays*' (Cumbria Tourist Board 1990, p.9).
3. Cost effectiveness has become increasingly important through the industry, especially within the public sector. This is being achieved by increased flexibility and diversification (see also Chapter Six).
4. Although most operators are too small to reach overseas markets, there have been some developments in this area. The Youth Hostels' Association, for example, which is one of the major providers in the voluntary sector, is focusing attention on foreign visitors by increasing its marketing overseas and improving its provision within historic cities in the UK. A couple of public sector centres have links with youth and school groups in European twin towns. Many interviewees pointed to the fact that the UK leads the way in outdoor adventurous activities in terms of expertise, experience and provision.

In sum, therefore, it appears that the main areas of expansion within the outdoor activity business are likely to be within the adult, commercial and overseas sectors, perhaps at the expense of young people. It is impossible, however, given the fickle nature of the activity holiday market, to predict accurately future trends. Even within the commercial sector, clients' demands are constantly changing. There has, for example, been a shift away from team building exercises through arduous and challenging physical pursuits to more time being spent on in-house evaluation of team kinetics i.e. a move from the outdoors to the classroom. As one manager commented, '*The outdoor adventure component is becoming less important in management training programmes. It's all beer and flipcharts nowadays*'. At the same time there has been an increase in skills training as a result of safety reforms and an expansion in 'skilled consumption'. The industry is becoming more specialised yet more diverse and, with the growth

of day centres, increasingly flexible. Although niche marketing can be very effective for small organisations, specialisation can make such ventures more vulnerable (Morgan 1996). One day centre owner maintained that it took approximately 4-5 years to become fully established as an independent operator. Given the unpredictable nature of the tourist industry alone, the risks associated with such ventures are high. There are other issues. If residential centres are forced to close, for example, because the premises are too expensive to maintain, it may prove impossible, within the current socio-economic climate, to find suitable alternative accommodation i.e. that is both affordable and acceptable within the confines of the planning system. The ability to attract customers, across all sectors, appears to be increasingly dependent upon the quality of provision, but as centres are improved so the cost of courses is likely to increase.

5. *The growth of day centres raises issues about the importance of the residential experience*

Many of the advocates of outdoor adventure have, for a long time, drawn attention to the perceived benefits of the residential experience. The Newsom Report, Half Our Future, concluded that pupils living away from home, even for a short period, in a small and intimate group and in a novel environment, '*seem to come back with a new zest for everything they do*' (Central Advisory Council for Education 1963, Para 151) and that '*for the pupils who come from difficult home backgrounds and live in socially deprived neighbourhoods, these can be opportunities of special help*' (Para 152). The Schools Council's report Outdoor Education in Secondary Schools suggested that pupils' personal, social, physical and skills development could all benefit from the residential experience (Schools Council 1980). Hunt (1989) argued that exciting activities out-of-doors could only be transformed into a learning experience of really fundamental value when participants live closely together as a group sharing both daily tasks and the excitement of the outdoor life. The Physical Education Working Group has recommended that a residential experience should be a part of the school

curriculum (Figure 4.5).

Similar sentiments about the value of the residential experience have been echoed throughout this study. Centre managers, for example, have made reference to improvements in relationships between staff and pupils and amongst pupils during residential visits and, conversely, to the difficulties posed by short courses. Some centres require that young people undertake domestic duties as a part of the personal and social development programme. The Youth Hostels' Association, for example, believes that the sense of camaraderie engendered at its hostels, because of its emphasis on 'communal living', is one of the Association's strengths (Youth Hostels' Association - personal communication 02.07.96.). A number of centres have tried to create a friendly and secure atmosphere and to foster a 'sense of belonging'. Such qualities, centre managers argue, are often lacking in young people's home environments.

The issue, therefore, is the extent to which the residential experience can remain central to outdoor adventurous activities. As the Council for Outdoor Education, Training and Recreation (1996) have pointed out, although Governments have repeatedly acknowledged the value of the residential experience, they have also repeatedly pointed out the impracticality of funding it for all pupils. The existing provision, as the study findings have shown, is already stretched to capacity. Local education authority centres, for example, are full for most of the year and, as Taverner (1994) has argued, will never be able to cater for the demand even from school groups. The study findings suggest that there is an increasing demand from school groups for day courses. Schools can, at present, be accommodated by day centres which tend to be fully booked during the main holiday season of July and August, but have spare capacity during May and June which is the most popular time for school trips. If the trend in non-residential centres continues, especially given the constraints faced by residential centres including the reluctance by some Parks, to see any expansion in outdoor provision, there is cause for even greater concern.

Figure 4.5 National Curriculum Physical Education Working Group. Statement on the Value of the Residential Experience

Our belief in the value of a residential experience is based on its potential contribution to the development of the whole child by encouraging a holistic view of knowledge through a truly cross-curricula approach. This provides exciting and positive learning situations outside the formal discipline or curriculum subject by allowing,

-Pupils to face real issues which make their learning relevant to their daily lives. The experience is direct and personal, obvious and inescapable.

- Pupils to experience different, perhaps challenging new places that broaden their knowledge of the world and help them to understand the needs and aspirations of other people.

- Pupils to have time to develop new relationships and consideration for others; to make choices and observe the consequences; to become aware of their own identities and potential and to enhance their own self-esteem.

-Pupils to receive training in leadership, teamwork, planning and motivation. It is an effective medium for the development of positive pupil-teacher relationships and pro-school feelings which have a long-lasting effect on return to the classroom.

(Source: Department of Education and Science and the Welsh Office 1991a)

The Council for Outdoor Education, Training and Recreation is proposing that when the Lottery Millennium Fund ceases in the year 2000, lottery money could be channelled into outdoor provision to ensure that all young people have access to residential opportunities (Loynes 1998a). This remains a possibility whilst there is Government support for the concept of the residential experience and if educational projects outside of the National Curriculum become eligible for lottery funding.

4.4 Concluding Remarks

Whilst recent years have seen a growth in urban leisure complexes, the owners and managers of outdoor activity centres in the National Parks have had to contend with a number of problems created by an ageing, and often far from adequate, building stock. Although some improvements have taken place across all sectors, many centres, especially within the voluntary sector, still lack adequate facilities and permanent staff. The cost of restoration and refurbishment and the constraints of the planning system, means that major improvements, at some centres, are unlikely to take place. Despite the problems, there appears to be a growing demand for places at outdoor centres and a continued interest in outdoor adventurous activities, especially those activities which depend upon the natural resources of the National Parks.

One of the most significant findings, in terms of centre ownership, is the growth in private sector provision, especially the increase in non-residential provision. The expansion of the private sector has been accompanied by a change in the general nature of programmes across all types of centre. There has been an increase in skills-based activities and a growth in non-sporting special interest holidays. These programmes have, in the main, been directed at the adult market and there are few indications that this pattern is about to change. The implication is that young people may be gradually squeezed out from private sector provision. There is already evidence to show, for example, that the percentage of young people attending privately owned centres is significantly lower than other types of centre. There appears to be an assumption, amongst some providers in

the private sector, that the public and voluntary sectors are better placed to provide for young people, in part, because of their long-standing experience of working with this group. However, these sectors are themselves under considerable pressure, as it will be seen in Chapter Six, to widen their client base. Given, also, the changes occurring within school visits to outdoor centres (Chapter Six), the role of the private sector, in attracting a much wider range of 14-18 year olds than public and voluntary sector centres, assumes greater importance.

The current fabric of the centre network, combined with the growth in day centres, and the trend towards specialisation and diversification, raises concerns about the stability of outdoor provision. If maintenance costs force centres to close, it may be impossible for their owners to find alternative provision. If centres continue to specialise, they may become more vulnerable to the whims and fashions of the holiday and business markets. If the expansion in day centres continues, it may be at the expense of residential centres, and the residential experience, which forms an integral part of the outdoor experience, may be lost.

It has been seen, therefore, how centre ownership can play a significant role in determining the extent to which opportunities to participate in outdoor activities are made available to young people and to others. Ownership is, however, only one part of the equation. This chapter has made passing reference, for example, to planning policies and to the role of planning authorities in determining centre development. It has hinted at the part played by public sector centres in providing outdoor learning opportunities as part of educational programmes. It has referred to the increased demand for technical skills courses as a result of safety legislation, and to the threats posed by the growth in day centres. As the following chapters show, safety and educational reforms, together with planning and environmental policies, also have wide reaching implications for outdoor opportunities.

CHAPTER FIVE - THE IMPACT OF SAFETY REFORM ON OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUTDOOR ADVENTURE

5.1 Introduction

The inherent risk involved in outdoor adventurous activities means that safety issues have always been high on the outdoor activity centre agenda. Until recently, safety standards and requirements had been established independently by outdoor organisations, in the light of their own aims, areas of operation, staff qualifications and experience, and the age and level of responsibility of participants. Many providers had operated within the Code of Practice drawn up by the UK Activity Centre Advisory Committee, which included representatives from the major professional and statutory bodies, and aimed to promote the responsible provision of activities (UK Activity Centre Advisory Committee 1994). The mid 1990s, however, saw significant changes in safety regulations. Increasing demands for safety reform, following the deaths of 4 young people on a canoeing trip in Lyme Bay, Dorset, which was organised by an outdoor activity centre, led to the Activity Centres (Young Persons' Safety) Act 1995. This Act made provision for an activity centre licensing scheme which introduced new safety standards within the outdoor sector.

The Activity Centres Act 1995 has been introduced at a time when there is not only increasing emphasis on both health and safety in the workplace, and child safety and protection, but also increasing pressure on outdoor centres to become more accountable to their funding organisations and client groups. The combined effect of legislative reform and regulation of activities appears to be having a significant impact on the operation of outdoor centres. The intentions of this chapter are, therefore, threefold. Firstly, to outline the provisions of the licensing scheme. Secondly, to examine the effect of legislation and regulation on the operation of outdoor centres, in terms of administrative and training requirements, group profiles, and the nature of activities. Thirdly, to explore how the reforms have affected young people's access to outdoor opportunities and to consider whether, without proof of effectiveness, the benefits of licensing outweigh the potential loss of the 'adventure' element of outdoor adventure.

5.2 The Safety Licensing Scheme

The legal requirements of the licensing scheme are laid out in the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 1996 (Statutory Instrument 1996 No. 772) (Health and Safety Executive 1996a). Advice to the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority, which administers the scheme, is provided in Guidance to the Licensing Authority on the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 1996 (Health and Safety Commission 1996).

The aim of the licensing scheme is,

'To give assurance that good safety management practice is being followed so that young people can have opportunities to experience exciting and stimulating activities outdoors whilst not being exposed to avoidable risks of death or disabling injury'

(Health and Safety Commission 1996, p.1)

The main provisions of the scheme are indicated below (Figure 5.1)

5.3 The Effect of Reform and Regulation on the Operation of Outdoor Centres and the Profile of Visitor Groups

- 1) Regulation of the outdoor industry has led to the extensive review of outdoor activity policy and practice

It was evident, from the interviews with centre managers, that an increasing amount of time is being spent, at all types of staffed outdoor centres, on the review of centre policy and practice as a result of,

- the licensing scheme,

Figure 5.1 The provisions of the activity centre licensing scheme

General requirements

The statutory scheme is aimed at anyone who provides, in return for payment, adventure activities within the scope of the licensing scheme, to young people under 18.

Activities covered

The scheme covers a number of activities including,

- *Caving (underground exploration in natural caves and mines including pot holing, cave diving and mine exploration, excluding show caves or tourist mines open to the public, or parts of mines which are still being worked)
- *Climbing (climbing, traversing, abseiling and scrambling activities except on purpose - designed climbing walls or abseiling towers)
- *Trekking (walking, running, pony trekking, mountain biking, off-piste skiing and related activities when done in moorland, or any terrain over 600m which is remote)
- *Watersports (canoeing, rafting, sailing and related activities when done on the sea, tidal waters, or larger or non-placid inland waters)

Exemptions

There are a number of exemptions from the scheme, including

- provision by voluntary associations to their members
- provision by educational establishments to their pupils
- provision of any activities for young people who are accompanied by their parents or legally appointed guardians

Individuals made temporary members of a voluntary association for the duration of a course of instruction sold by that association are not treated as members for the purposes of the licensing scheme

Educational establishments are required to hold a licence if providing to persons other than their own pupils

Local authorities are required to hold a licence for adventure activity facilities offered for payment in the same way as other providers. They must hold a licence for activities provided to educational establishments, regardless of whether payment is required.

- compliance with other safety regulations such as risk assessment (see, for example, Health and Safety Executive 1996b),
- local government demands for greater accountability and quality assurance,
- public demands for improved safety and quality provision,
- outdoor providers' concerns about litigation in the event of an accident.

Many operators regard the review process as beneficial both to the centre and to clients. It enables centres to identify potential hazards, to readjust working processes, and to reduce risks. Some centres have been undertaking risk assessment for many years and are accustomed to producing consent forms, safety contracts, and information packs for visiting groups on safety procedures and insurance cover (see, for example, Appendices 5 and 6). Some centres believe that the more information they provide, the greater the likelihood of potential customers buying into services.

Complaints about the increasing paperwork and bureaucracy created by regulatory requirements are, however, widespread. Centres with skeleton staff, for example, are having to sacrifice outdoor activity time in order to complete time sheets. One family-run equestrian centre maintains a daily accident log book, veterinary log book, tack record, cleaning record, and shoeing record, and holds information on National Vocational Qualification training, in-house training, and first aid training. Many centre managers expressed frustration and resentment at the time and effort expended on these perceived chores which they regard as an insult to their professionalism. Some centres, which have applied for licences, have opted out of other accredited schemes because of the time and expense involved in putting together applications.

2) *Safety licensing has led to a shift of visitor groups amongst centres*

Interviews with centre managers revealed that a number of centres had experienced a change in visitor groups as a direct result of the licensing scheme. In particular, a number of licensed centres within the private sector have seen an increase in the number of under 18s. This is attributed to the fact that although

some types of centre are exempt from the scheme - for example, voluntary sector centres providing for their own members - some group leaders are choosing licensed centres as an 'assurance of safety'. This is happening even though courses may be more expensive. Private sector centres, for example, have seen a rise in groups undertaking activities for the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. Some shifts are seen as temporary. According to one centre owner, '*schools have gone for well known names such as Outward Bound to maintain parents' confidence whilst the licensing scheme is being sorted out*'. Private companies, increasingly fearful of litigation claims, are also thought to be seeking out licensed centres, for both youth and adult training although, as many centres were eager to point out, licensing is no guarantee of safety. It is believed that, outwith the outdoor industry, there remains a general level of ignorance about the licensing system.

3) Safety licensing has led to an increase in staff training

Outdoor instructors have, traditionally, tended to specialise in one or two outdoor activities and to acquire qualifications and experience in those areas. Interviewees suggested, however, that the licensing scheme, which requires at least a minimum level of qualifications in all specified activities, is putting increasing pressure on centres to ensure that staff are qualified in a wider range of activities. This has led to an increase in staff training. The expense of skills training is being met by centres or, increasingly, by staff themselves. The need for such training is, ironically, providing business for other centres specialising in such skills training courses.

4) Safety considerations are leading to a change in the nature of outdoor activities

Concerns over safety appear to be leading to gradual changes in the type and range of activities provided at, or undertaken from, activity centres. Some centre managers indicated, during the interviews, that they have already reduced, or are considering reducing, the number of high risk activities on offer as part of

outdoor programmes. These include activities, such as sea kayaking and caving, which take place in unpredictable environments. Regulatory requirements on staff to pupil ratios have led some centres to increase the level of staff employed or, alternatively, to reduce the range of activities undertaken or the number of participants involved. The findings from this study appear to confirm the predictions made by centre providers shortly after the introduction of the Activity Centres Act 1995, i.e. that some centres would become increasingly reluctant to deliver authentic adventurous activities for fear of being sued in the event of an accident (Richardson 1995).

Many centres are required, through local authority policy, to make clear to participants, parents, schools and group leaders, before courses begin, exactly what activities will be undertaken, where they will take place, and under what conditions. The need for this level of detail makes the courses less flexible and reduces the opportunities for 'surprise' activities which, interviewees argued, has previously added to the sense of adventure. Centres within the voluntary sector have seen a fall in the number of impromptu visits made by their members. As one centre leader commented '*leaders who, at one time, would willingly have loaded a few canoes onto a trailer and brought a small group of youngsters away for the weekend are thinking twice about such trips in case anything goes wrong*'.

5.4 The Implications of Regulation on the Outdoor Industry - A Threat to Outdoor Adventure?

1) *Licensing appears to be leading to significant readjustments within the operation of the outdoor sector*

Out of an estimated 3000 outdoor centres eligible for a licence, less than 1000 had applied by 1.10.97., the date when licences became a legal requirement (Ogilvie 1996, p.2). This means that either 1) the total number of outdoor centres has been over-estimated, 2) that centres are operating illegally, or 3) that centres are changing their mode of operation or are ceasing to operate.

Apart from the Dartington Amenity Research Trust's study, Groups in the Countryside, published in 1980, there is no comprehensive nation-wide survey of outdoor activity centres, and it is quite likely, therefore, that provision has been over estimated. There are, also, indications from the current study that some centres within the voluntary sector, and some sole traders within the private sector, do not have the time, money or inclination to apply for a licence. As a consequence, these providers focus their activities on members only, or on the over 18s. The requirements relating to instructor qualifications and staff to pupil ratios, means that centres may have to increase the number of instructors they employ or reduce the range of activities they offer. The need to secure suitably experienced and qualified staff may mean higher wages and, ultimately, additional costs for centres although, as Barnes (1997) points out, factors other than salary play an important role in motivating individuals to work in the outdoor industry.

Proposals by the Department of Education and the Health and Safety Executive to introduce a non-statutory voluntary licensing scheme, to include those providers not covered by the current legislation, are meeting with opposition on the grounds of potential cost, administrative time, and lack of evidence to show that the statutory scheme is working effectively. As the editor of the National Association for Outdoor Education Newsletter has commented,

'once again we may see outdoor adventurous opportunities for young people diminishing, despite all the declarations of the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority that its wish is to avoid that'

(Ogilvie 1997, p.3)

Some centre managers suggested that the introduction of licensing, which would impose an additional cost on the centre, would lead to an increase in course fees. Some centres even see the licensing system as an opportunity to increase costs. As one manager commented, *'some customers will be prepared to pay more for peace of mind, and for what they think is good quality'*. Given that cost is already thought to be a significant factor preventing young people from

participating in outdoor programmes, these proposed changes raise further questions about affordable course fees. Interestingly, in the questionnaire survey, licensing was not thought to be a major factor deterring or preventing young people from taking up outdoor courses. This may be due to the fact that the licensing scheme was being implemented at the time of the survey, and its long term implications were possibly not considered in the questionnaire responses. Also, the concept of a voluntary licensing scheme had only just been conceived.

At the time of the survey, some centres were applying for licences, even though they did not routinely work with the under 18s, because they believed it would give them additional status, a 'stamp of approval'. Many centres see holding a licence as a cheap way of advertising. Few centres thought that operators would be tempted to act illegally, given the consequences for the centre involved in the Lyme Bay tragedy.

One group of freelance operators is currently discussing the possibility of forming a co-operative which would operate under one licence. This would allow for more flexibility of operation, would require less administrative time, and would be cheaper than individual applications. This sort of proposal raises a number of issues, in particular, the effectiveness of a scheme which allows for partial exemption from licensing. There are already a number of freelance operators who sub-contract work.

Recent years have seen an unprecedented growth in the number of cases taken to court, as a result of accident, injury or maltreatment. According to centre managers, the fear of litigation is leading to growing unease, especially amongst voluntary group leaders, about their involvement with young people. The Ramblers' Association, which has been instrumental in organising countryside walks - and occasionally overnight stays - at a local level, has expressed concern that it is becoming more difficult to find adults to undertake such tasks (Ramblers' Association - personal communication 08.07.96.). Several centre operators, when interviewed, made reference to the Children Act 1989 which introduced, for the first time a unified code for the care of young people (for an

analysis of the provisions of the Act see, for example, Feldman 1990). A number also made reference to the increasing level of public concern about child welfare. As one centre manager commented, *'if a child falls over, is helped to his feet, and is given a reassuring hug, the incident can so easily be misconstrued and the leader accused, at best, of negligence and, at worst, of child abuse'*.

What is important here, is that the voluntary sector, as the study findings show, has the major share of outdoor provision (52%), that many centres within the voluntary sector are unstaffed, and that youth groups, who rely largely on volunteer leaders, make up 17 % of all visitors in the 14-18 age group. It is often the enthusiasm and commitment of such leaders which enables young people to have access to the outdoors.

2. The effectiveness of the licensing system is under question

The study did not set out, specifically, to examine the effectiveness of the licensing scheme. However, the points made during the interviews do raise a number of issues which are relevant to the aims of the study.

The licensing scheme is designed to ensure that good safety management is being practised. It aims to prevent the sort of scenarios arising which were detected in a study of activity centres prior to the Activity Centres Act 1995. Activity Holiday Centres. 'Managing a Safer Product' showed, for example, that one quarter of the centres examined kept no record of accidents and that, in just under one half of centres, no staff had first aid certificates (Safety in Leisure Research Unit 1993, p.i). Prior to the 1995 Act, businesses with less than 5 employees, which effectively covered the majority of outdoor centres, were not required by law to have a written statement of health and safety policy or to assess risks. Interviewees were of the opinion that the licensing scheme was sending out reassuring messages to the general public, even though the scheme's effectiveness had not been proven, and the public were unaware of its full implications. As Loynes (1998b) argues, it may be that the Health and Safety Executive were right in their prediction that the main benefit of licensing would

be an improved relationship between providers and users, rather than an impact on the safety record of an already safe industry.

There is also the issue of training. The relative importance of qualifications and experience in ensuring safety in the outdoors is a contentious one. Many managers argue that the licensing scheme is placing too much emphasis on formal qualifications and giving little consideration to those instructors with years of experience in the industry. The following remarks, made at the Outdoor Forum Conference 'Effective Outdoor Leadership', highlight the general concern,

'One of our ex-staff...with at least 15 years' experience, said to me recently when visiting us 'I served my apprenticeship, I learned over the years, by observing, assisting and gradually handling people on my own: Nowadays all you need is a piece of paper: It's the Fast Track system and I do not think it is right'. And I agree with him...To my knowledge it is still possible to gain one National Governing Body qualification without ever having any experience of working with people. Just a 4 day course!'

(Rawlingson-Plant 1997, p.10).

The Adventure Activities Licensing Authority also acknowledges that National Governing Body qualifications have their limitations, whilst '*competence through experience*' can be difficult to measure and even more difficult to prove (Ogilvie 1996). These problems are compounded by the fact that 1) many licensed centres or operators employ non-licensed instructors to help out with courses and, therefore, standards are even more difficult to control, and 2) even the most rigorous of vetting procedures provides no guarantee of competence, especially in unpredictable and high risk situations. Centre owners who do not themselves provide instruction are growing increasingly reluctant to recommend independent operators (even if they are known to be reliable or to bond well with young people) so that, in the case of accident or injury, they cannot be held responsible.

3. Increasing regulation of the outdoor industry is threatening the whole concept of outdoor adventure

Outdoor adventure embodies the notion of challenge, stimulation, excitement and uncertainty. It cannot be disassociated from risk and, therefore, safety in outdoor education is of paramount importance. However, as it was pointed out in Outdoor Education Safety Network, a study which was set up to analyse accident statistics, '*Society would be the poorer if restrictive regulations were to stifle the adventurous and enquiring spirit*' (Spastics Society 1988, cited in Hunt 1989, p. 199).

Heywood (1994) has argued that, in the case of climbing, there is already a growing rationalisation of the sport, because of the pressures exerted by the commercial sector on climbers to invest in the latest climbing gear, and the need for the climbing fraternity to present itself to the rest of society, or the media at least, as a legitimate recreational sport with a reasonable claim for access to increasingly scarce resources.

There is, also, evidence from this study to suggest that the sense of adventure is being stifled and that the nature of activities are beginning to change. There is, within outdoor programmes, less spontaneity and more forward planning. There are fewer surprises and more discussion about the precise order of events. As Richardson (1995) points out, developmental opportunities may be lost as a result of the reduced provision of authentic adventurous experiences.

The 'dampening down' of activities is being aided, in part, by the attitude of the participants themselves and, in the case of young people, by the attitude of parents and teachers. Young people, accustomed to increasing home-based entertainment in the form of television, video and computer games, are not able to cope, some centre managers argue, with the rigours of the 'great outdoors'. Parental attitudes were said to vary, from those parents who wanted their offspring to be given '*a bit of a hard time*' to those who did not want them to be exposed to anything that was perceived as '*too challenging*'. There was also a

feeling, amongst centre operators, that few schools actively encourage young people to take responsibility for themselves or to use initiative in classroom situations which can then be transferred to programmes out-of-doors. Many managers were of the opinion that, providing risk is minimised, young people can learn by their mistakes but that, too often, teachers are too ready to interfere. Perhaps, then, there is a need for a new culture within schools, which recognises the potential value of outdoor adventure rather than focusing on the perceived inconvenience of outdoor courses and the possibility of something going wrong. As Bonnington has argued,

'Adventure education...is not taking people to a cocooned environment, in total safety...it is enabling people to have the skills to go and explore, experience and understand at what ever level and degree they want'

(Bonnington 1996, p.8).

5.5 Concluding Remarks

Increasing regulation of the outdoor industry has added to the pressures faced by outdoor providers many of whom, particularly within the voluntary sector, are already suffering from inadequate resources. The licensing scheme has been met with mixed reaction by centre managers. It has been seen, by some, as an opportunity to review procedures and, by others, as not only an inconvenience and insult to professionalism, but also as an unnecessary burden, given the excellent safety record of most centres. Despite the additional obligations being placed on centres, there is no evidence to suggest that visitors are being turned away. Indeed, the study shows that, across all types of centre, opening periods have been extended and occupancy rates have increased.

The licensing scheme has led to visitors making uninformed, and sometimes irrational, decisions about the centres they use, and, ironically, to some centres pulling out of accredited Tourist Board schemes with which the public are perhaps more in tune. Some centres have decided not to apply for a licence.

Some have applied, not because they necessarily rely for business on programmes for the under 18s, but because a licence is seen as a valuable asset, allowing course fees to be increased and providing a measure of reassurance, to clients, about the standards of provision.

The outcome of these decisions on young people's access to outdoor opportunities is difficult to determine. Some centres, for example, have made clear that they have no interest in working with young people. If they do obtain a licence, it is unlikely to affect the composition of client groups. There was certainly no indication, from the questionnaire returns, that centres which have focused, in previous years, on adult groups, are about to tap into the young persons' market. Equally, only a couple of respondents indicated that they no longer intended working with young people. Most centres, however great the perceived cost and inconvenience of the scheme, were in the process of applying for a licence at the time of the survey. If the costs of licensing are passed on to visitors via increased fees, then this may worsen the financial burden faced by some parents, schools and youth groups in finding sufficient funds for residential trips. The fact that two thirds of centres, thought to be eligible for a licence, had not registered by the end of 1997, also raises questions about access. It is impossible to gauge, for example, how many of these centres might have been catering for young people if, indeed, they ever existed.

Perhaps the most significant finding, is that regulation of the industry is having an impact on the way in which outdoor adventurous activities are being undertaken. Many argue that the 'adventure' element is being taken out of outdoor adventurous activities, that the freedom and challenge it offers is being stifled by increasing bureaucracy and that, in a decade which has seen unprecedented amounts of money being paid out in litigation claims, unnecessary precaution is overriding common sense. Some of those within the voluntary sector are becoming increasingly reluctant to organise adventurous activities for young people. It is often their commitment and enthusiasm, however, which help to open up opportunities. The same applies to those working within the formal educational system. As the following chapter shows, young people's

involvement in outdoor pursuits is often dependent upon the dedication of staff and schools and on the perceived benefits that these activities have to offer.

CHAPTER SIX - THE IMPACT OF EDUCATIONAL REFORM ON OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUTDOOR ADVENTURE

6.1 Introduction

The educational system has always played a key role in outdoor learning. The idea of the moral, physical and social development of pupils through physical exercise and challenge was pioneered, in the early part of the century, through the public school system. The 1944 Education Act gave local authorities the duty to provide for recreational and residential facilities, and between 1960 and 1980, over 350 local education authority centres were established in England and Wales (Hargreaves 1988 p.82).

The Education Reform Act 1988 resulted in a number of radical changes within the educational system, including the establishment of the National Curriculum and the introduction of local management of schools. These reforms have had a profound effect on the operation of outdoor centres, the composition of visitor groups, and the content of outdoor courses. Although public sector centres have borne the brunt of the changes, the impacts have been felt throughout the outdoor industry.

This chapter starts by outlining the aims and structure of the National Curriculum, and the provisions of the 1988 Act as they relate to school management and outdoor activities. It then examines the changes which have occurred at outdoor centres since 1988, including the growth in field studies, the rise in primary school visits, and the diversification of centre activities. It goes on to consider the implications of the observed trends on young people's opportunities to participate in outdoor activities, in terms of centre resources, equitable provision and environmental sustainability.

6.2 The Provisions of the Education Reform Act 1988

The National Curriculum

The National Curriculum is designed to standardise teaching methods and to improve educational standards nation-wide (for an overview of the National Curriculum see, for example, Emerson 1989, Sweetman 1996). It aims, through a balanced and broadly based approach, to promote *'the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils'* and *'to prepare such pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life'* (Her Majesty's Government 1988, p.1).

The National Curriculum comprises a number of core and foundation subjects which are taught to all pupils of compulsory school age (i.e. 5-16) in state sector schools. The subjects are organised on the basis of four Key Stages: Key Stage 1 (5-7 years), Key Stage 2 (7-11 years), Key Stage 3 (11-14 years), and Key Stage 4 (14-16 years). The curriculum for each subject is set out in statutory subject Orders which specify programmes of study (the matters, skills and processes to be taught), and attainment targets (the knowledge, skills and understanding to be acquired).

School Management

The Education Act introduced a number of other reforms including,

1. The local management of schools, which gives local education authorities powers to allocate school budgets, delegates the management of schools to local managers (usually the head teacher and governing body), and enables individual institutions to 'buy into' the facilities and services of their choice.

2. The establishment of Grant Maintained schools which have corporate status and, apart from following the National Curriculum, are relatively free from local education authority direction and influence.
3. The clarification, through the miscellaneous provisions of the Act, of a number of extra-curricula activities. The provisions allow local education authorities and schools, for example, to charge for board and lodgings provided for pupils on residential field trips, and to impose additional costs for activities occurring outwith normal school hours.

6.3 The Manifestations of Educational Reform on Participants, Providers and Outdoor Activities

The ways in which the above reforms have impacted on the outdoor activity sector can be seen in relation to some of the major trends which have emerged from the study. Thus,

1. *There has been a significant increase, within school groups, in curricula-related field work across public, private and voluntary sector centres*

The National Curriculum encourages field studies as a means of exploring specific subject areas and of contributing to the wider outdoor learning programme. In Geography Key Stage 3, for example, pupils are required to,

'undertake studies...that involve fieldwork and classroom activities; studies should involve the development of skills, and the development of knowledge and understanding about places and themes'

(Department of Education 1995, p.10).

In turn, outdoor education is seen as playing an important role in cross-curricula activities. Thus, Curriculum Guidance 3. The Whole Curriculum states,

'outdoor education can make a significant contribution as a focus of cross-curricula work...there is a value in sampling activities which may become the basis of life long outdoor pursuits..(there is) an ideal opportunity for field work in geography, science, physical education, environmental education and education for citizenship'

(National Curriculum Council 1990, p.6).

This emphasis on field work means that, whereas 20 years ago, outdoor pursuits dominated the outdoor scene (Dartington Amenity Research Trust 1980), field studies are now an increasingly important component of centre activities. Not only are more centres being used as a base for field studies (approximately 70% of all centres in the study), but also there is a rise both in the number of field study courses on offer, and in the amount of time allocated to field work within mixed activity courses. Several centre managers, including all of the local education authority centre managers interviewed, indicated that the relative amount of time spent on field studies and outdoor pursuits is approximately 70:30, compared to, at the most, 50:50 a few years ago.

The fact that the National Curriculum places such emphasis on field work, particularly within statutory programmes of study for the under 14s, means that recent years have also seen a significant increase in primary school visits to outdoor centres. It is estimated, at some centres, that primary schools now account for 60-90% of all visitor groups, compared to a 50:50 split with secondary school groups a few years ago. The Countryside Commission's study Young People's Access to Learning Experiences has made similar observations (Countryside Commission 1994). The increase in primary school visits is not confined to local education authority centres. Youth hostels, for instance, are experiencing a significant rise in primary school visits, and centres, across all sectors, reported that they are receiving more enquiries from primary school teachers than ever before.

Some centres have acted as a base for field studies for many years and are well equipped with class room, laboratory, and library facilities. Even those which lack such provision are still been used by turning bedrooms and common rooms

into makeshift study rooms. Interviews with centre managers revealed, however, that centres are increasingly adapting to meet National Curriculum needs. Some centres are in the process of improving facilities. A few are seeking new staff with teaching qualifications. Others are developing programmes with National Park Authorities which aim to fulfil curricula requirements. Even on teacher-led courses, in which teachers run their own activities using centre facilities, more emphasis is being placed on the forward planning of such courses in collaboration with centre staff, in order to maximise the potential benefits of these programmes. Some centres are changing their publicity material to emphasise their suitability as a base for field studies. One centre has dropped the words 'outdoor pursuits' from its title, even though such outdoor activities are still an important part of its work, in order to place more emphasis on its formal educational role.

2. *Outdoor activities remain a popular component of outdoor courses, across all sectors*

Physical pursuits have always played a significant part in activities undertaken from outdoor centres. Indeed, the developmental potential of physical education was the *raison d'être* for the establishment of many of the early outdoor programmes. In 1980, outdoor physical pursuits were found to be the predominant activity in two thirds of all outdoor centres (Dartington Amenity Research Trust 1980), and they are still a major component of outdoor programmes. The questionnaire responses show, for example, that one third of responding centres offer outdoor activity courses only, including eleven local education authority centres.

The importance of outdoor activities was highlighted in The National Curriculum. Physical Education Working Group Interim Report:

'These pursuits demand and develop physical competence, fitness, judgement and application of knowledge, and therefore require and contribute to the general competencies provided by the broader physical education programme'

(Dept. of Education and Science and the Welsh Office 1991a, p.64).

Since the National Curriculum was revised in 1993, outdoor adventurous activities have been included in the physical education syllabus at Key Stages 2 - 4. Pupils aged 14-16 years, for example, are now taught a minimum of two activities including games and either gymnastics, dance, athletics, swimming, or outdoor and adventurous activities. The option in outdoor activities requires that pupils *'prepare for and undertake a journey safely, encompassing one or more activities, e.g. canoeing, fell walking, rock climbing, in an unfamiliar environment'* (Department of Education 1995, p.10).

Many centres can offer courses which fulfil these requirements. The following programme, arranged by one of the centres interviewed, is quite typical of those on offer (Figure 6.1).

Figure 6.1 Example of outdoor activity programme

<u>Activity session</u>	<u>Morning</u>	<u>Afternoon</u>	<u>Evening</u>
Monday	Arrival	Rock scrambling	Orienteering
Tuesday	Caving Day		Rope courses
Wednesday	Canoeing	Climbing / Abseiling	Games
Thursday	Mountain Day		Barbecue
Friday	Teamwork	Departure	

Additionally, some centres offer specialist skills courses for secondary school pupils, which allow pupils to further their interest in a particular activity and enable courses to be tailored to meet individual needs.

The Physical Education Working Group has drawn attention to the potential benefits of physical outdoor pursuits, in terms of developing skills and leadership qualities, raising safety awareness, and fostering an appreciation of the environment (Department of Education and Science and the Welsh Office 1991a). According to centre managers, it is the belief in such benefits which leads schools to continue to pursue outdoor adventurous activities through the National Curriculum.

3. *The relative time devoted to field studies and outdoor pursuits is influenced by National Curriculum programmes of study and perceived performance - related benefits*

The relative amount of time spent on field studies and outdoor activities at outdoor centres is, in part, dependent upon the content of each Key Stage of the National Curriculum. It is not surprising, therefore, that as field work is an integral component of several subjects, from science to art, it is becoming the dominant activity undertaken by groups at many centres, whilst outdoor adventurous activities are specific to the physical education syllabus. In terms of directed time i.e. the proportion of Curriculum time which is needed to meet statutory requirements, physical education is expected to take up only 5% of teaching time compared, for example, to 20% of teaching time on science-related subjects (Dearing 1994, p.41).

The growing imbalance between field studies and outdoor activities is also attributed to perceived performance-related benefits. Field studies, in addition to fulfilling syllabus requirements and helping pupils to achieve attainment targets (of which there are fewer for physical education than for most other subjects) are seen by teachers as a means of promoting better school work and examination performance. This is, of course, desirable, and is made even more so since the introduction, in 1992, of school performance or league tables, which contain indicators for vocational examinations, GCSE, A and AS level examination results. The value of such tables is, however, questionable (see, for example, Foxon 1997). Many centre managers believe that too much emphasis is being

placed on examination grades and insufficient account taken of the personal and social benefits to be derived from outdoor activities. As one centre manager commented, *'in a system which is performance driven, the perceived benefits of outdoor adventurous activities are less tangible than those of field studies, and outdoor activities tend to assume a lower priority'*.

4. The demands of the National Curriculum are making it more difficult for secondary schools to organise and undertake residential visits

According to the questionnaire survey results, 41% of centre visitors are aged between 14-18 years and, within this age group, secondary schools are amongst the main users. Given that only 6% of the population is within this age range (Office of Population Censuses and Surveys 1993, p.64), young people appear to be well represented. However, over one fifth of responding centres indicated that, over the course of a year, they had no visitors aged 14-18 years, and recent years have seen a dramatic plunge, across many centres, in secondary school visits. Whereas half of all the visiting groups at some centres comprised secondary schools a few years ago, this number had fallen, in some cases, to as little as 10%. The National Curriculum was cited, almost universally, as the most significant factor in bringing about this change.

That the National Curriculum is held to blame is hardly surprising. Even at its inception, there was widespread criticism that its administration was too complex, its content overloaded, and testing arrangements too complicated (Dearing 1994). In 1991, evidence submitted to the House of Commons' inquiry on Sport in Schools suggested that the decline in extra-curricula sporting activities was, in part, due to the unrealistic demands of the Curriculum in terms of directed time, planning meetings, and assessment exercises (House of Commons' Education, Science and Arts Committee 1991). These pressures were compounded by other constraints such as teacher contracts which, in some cases, did not allow for out-of-school activities. Many teachers devoted time to these activities on a voluntary basis. A review of the National Curriculum, in 1993, recommended that the volume of material taught should be reduced, the

programmes of study simplified, and the Orders made less prescriptive. The National Curriculum and its Assessment also made clear that, as the Education Reform Bill had initially intended, the Curriculum should occupy no more than 70-80% of school time at Key Stages 1-3 and closer to 60% at Key Stage 4 (Dearing 1994, p.21).

Despite these revisions, schools are still faced with a number of problems in organising and undertaking residential visits. It is especially difficult at secondary school level, where teachers have to reorganise work schedules and arrange supply cover. The cost of supply teaching is thought, by many centre managers, to be a significant contributory factor in preventing secondary schools from participating in outdoor courses. Some teachers appear reluctant to take pupils on outdoor courses during term time as this may disrupt course work and jeopardise examination performance. The teachers' strike of 1984, according to some of the questionnaire respondents, led to the loss of some secondary school business which has not been re-established. Some centre managers expressed the opinion that inner city schools experience particular difficulties in organising residential courses, because of the high number of special needs pupils and a higher turnover of staff. It is also believed that the pressures on secondary schools to offer more courses in order to attract pupils has led to the need for more staff, and to a reduction in resources spent in other areas, including out-of-school activities.

Secondary school pupils, aged 14-16 years, who are undertaking GCSEs, are denied the opportunity of outdoor learning, either through field work or outdoor activities, unless they choose to study GCSE geography, science or PE outdoor and adventurous activities. Even then, opportunities at GCSE level vary according to different Examining Boards.

5. Local authority spending cuts and local management of schools have led to a rise in local authority centre costs and to proposed increases in centre charges

Recent years have seen a gradual erosion of central government funding to local services. This has led to financial restructuring within local authorities, and to a review of local authority priorities and the reallocation of resources. One consequence has been a reduction in funding to local education authority owned centres. Virtually all of the responding local education authority centres in the study indicated that their funding had been reduced, in some cases, by up to 50%. Government subsidies vary from between 25% and 80%. Funding cuts have led to an increase in centre costs and have put increasing pressure on centres to become financially viable. Centres have reacted in a number of ways, namely, by increasing course fees, continuing to operate with budget deficits, closing, or diversifying into different types of activities and user groups.

Increasing fees

Some local education authority centre managers are of the opinion that course fees, for school groups, are unrealistically low, and that an increase in fees will be seen as acceptable by parents and schools. Others are concerned, however, that even slight increases may affect parents' ability to pay. As one manager commented '*£100 may seem very reasonable for full board and an activity-packed week, but for an unemployed single parent is a lot of money*'.

Course fees are dependent on a number of factors including the type and quality of provision and type of course. Typically, centres charge the following rates for full board and accommodation, equipment, instruction and transport for outdoor activity courses:

£20-25 per person per night for local school groups

£40-50 per person per night for schools outwith the local authority

£50-80 per person per night for adult groups

Importantly, one quarter of all questionnaire respondents indicated that course costs were one of the main factors preventing or deterring young people from taking up outdoor courses. Many centres have yet to increase their fees. Some have introduced differential rates for different types of group. A few centres, for example, charge higher rates (of up to 20%) to Grant Maintained schools. Some centres have increased fees only to find that groups have sought cheaper centres elsewhere. Some centres operate a system of block bookings for school groups which means that it does not matter to them if, for example, 5 or 50 places are filled. Given that there seems to be an insatiable demand from school groups for centre provision - most centres are operating at more than 90% capacity and some are fully booked for the next 2-3 years - unfilled places means that someone may be deprived of the opportunity to take part in outdoor programmes.

Continuing with budget deficit

Interviews with centre managers revealed that some centres are continuing to run with a budget deficit in the hope that, 1) the shortfall will eventually be met through local authority expenditure, and 2) it will prove difficult, given the demand for, and commitment to, residential visits, for local authorities to justify centre closures. There was general agreement, amongst centre managers, that the commitment of those involved in organising and funding residential visits for outdoor learning, is an important factor in determining the level of course uptake and, ultimately, the viability of outdoor centres. It is acknowledged that tremendous efforts are often made to ensure that centres remain open. Some local authorities have policy statements on outdoor education and residential provision, for example, in entitlement curricula. Others, notably Labour-controlled authorities, have explicit policies of equitable access. The support for outdoor centres is often dependent upon local authority organisation and departmental responsibility. There was also agreement, amongst centre managers, that in cases where responsibility for activity centres, outdoor education and youth services is centralised within local government, there is often a higher commitment to outdoor learning. The attitude of teaching staff, especially head teachers, to outdoor adventurous activities is seen, by many centre managers, as a crucial factor in determining the level of uptake.

Facing closure

Only one centre in the study indicated that it was in imminent danger of closure and, even then, was quite optimistic that the situation would be resolved at the eleventh hour. A similar crisis, two years previously, had led to the formation of a charitable trust, the sole purpose of which was to raise funds to keep the centre open. The manager felt that the local authority faced too much opposition from schools, teachers and centre staff to allow the centre to close.

This situation contrasts sharply with the findings from Taverner's study Local Education Authority Centres as a Resource for Sport and Active Recreation which showed that, in the five years following the Education Reform Act 1988, 30 local education authority centres had closed and approximately one third were under threat of closure (Taverner 1994, p.vii).

It is, of course, possible that the centres facing closure at the time of the study or, indeed, those which may have closed in recent years, were amongst the non-respondents. National Park Authorities were contacted to check centre closures. None were aware of any closures, other than those indicated in the questionnaire returns. Thirty two questionnaires were returned uncompleted, the respondents indicating that the centres were no longer in operation. Some centre owners had retired and some properties had reverted back to private residential accommodation. Two centres had been turned into hotels. The dates when centres ceased to operate was not always given although, in many cases, centres had been closed for over 10 years. None were identified as local education authority centres.

Another explanation, as the following section indicates, is that centres are managing to remain open by broadening their activity and client base.

6. Centres, especially within the public and voluntary sector, have widened their client and activity base in order to reduce their reliance on educational groups and to increase their sources of income

Centre diversification has taken a number of directions:

1. Some centres have introduced new courses in their slack periods, such as out of term time, or at weekends. These typically comprise courses for families or adult groups in topics as wide ranging as bird watching and wildflower identification to local history and water colour painting, and are proving successful, in part, because they have coincided with the increased demand for short break special interest holidays (see, for example, Leisure Consultants 1992).
2. Some centres have found a niche in other types of activities. One centre, for example, provides military style programmes, which are carried out on sites outside of the National Park, and include tank driving, assault courses, and clay pigeon shooting for what it loosely calls the 'business person's market'.
3. Other centres have increased the number of specialist skills courses they offer. One of the advantages is that many of these courses are short, typically 2-3 days in duration, and centres can charge at least double the cost of an equivalent length school visit.

The questionnaire returns suggest that such courses, at present, probably account for no more than 20% of centre time and often take place out of school term time i.e. so as not to affect school visits. Approximately 8% of centres recorded an overall decline in school groups as a result of diversification. One centre indicated that it has recently reduced its intake of 13-16 year olds by 20%, in order to accommodate adult groups. Youth groups have often borne the brunt of the changes: Some questionnaire respondents indicated that by introducing new courses at weekends for adult groups, they had effectively reduced opportunities

for the youth sector. Many youth organisations tend to visit outdoor centres at the weekend.

Local education authority centres are in something of a dilemma. Local management of schools has given educational institutions the ability to 'buy into' the facilities and services of their choice and within their financial means and, as schools now hold the purse strings, they are demanding value for money. Many centres are committed, through local government policies, to providing a service to their own local authority schools and yet have to demonstrate that the services they offer are worthwhile. One way of doing this has been to tie activities as closely as possible to the National Curriculum, not only during the residential stay, but also back at school. A number of environmental education programmes have been developed to meet this objective.

It should perhaps be added that, during the interviews, some centre managers expressed their reluctance or unwillingness to diversify into more lucrative markets because of 1) their commitment to work with young people, 2) inappropriate accommodation or facilities, 3) under-utilisation of staff skills (some instructors, for example, have been trained to work specifically with the under 18s), 4) a lack of administrative resources, and 5) a lack of marketing expertise.

6.4 Educational Reform and Emerging Trends in the Outdoor Sector - The Implications

The above sections have focused on a number of emerging trends which, it is argued, are a direct manifestation of recent educational reform. Thus, there is,

1. A growth within school groups in curricula-related field studies and a decline in outdoor activities per se.

2. A rise in primary school visits to outdoor centres and a corresponding decline in secondary school activity.
3. An overall reduction in school visits to outdoor centres and an increase in use by other user groups.

The implications of these changes are widespread, extending from the immediate problems associated with access, such as the competing demands for places on outdoor courses and the availability of resources, to more complex issues such as the sustainability of outdoor activities. It is intended here to touch on some of these issues as they relate to each of the above themes and to examine, briefly, aspects of education which fall outside of the National Curriculum.

Field Studies versus Outdoor Activities

Although recent years have seen a significant rise in field studies and an overall decline in physical outdoor pursuits it is not inevitable that these trends will continue because,

1. The National Curriculum contains a large number of optional or non-statutory elements.
2. Support for outdoor learning, through GCSEs, varies with subject matter, type of award and syllabus followed.
3. Whilst the National Curriculum Council and Physical Education Working Party have supported the idea of a residential experience as part of cross-curricula opportunities, the Government has failed to make the residential stay a mandatory requirement (Department of Education and Science and the Welsh Office 1991b).

If the rise in field studies does persist, however, it raises questions over the current level of centre resources and the appropriateness of curricula-related field work in National Parks.

The study has shown that some outdoor centres have good facilities for field studies. The vast majority, however, have neither the space nor capital to invest in improvements. Most of those visited were using temporary accommodation in the form of Portacabins. Some have sought planning permission for extensions and additional units, only to find that permission has not been granted because of the potential impacts of such development. Not only, then, may the demand for better field study facilities put increasing pressure on local planning authorities, but it may also expose centres to the risks of investing in facilities only to find that educational targets have shifted yet again. There have already been a series of radical revisions to the National Curriculum since it was introduced 10 years ago.

A continued rise in field studies has other implications. Although staff at some centres have multiple responsibilities, outdoor instructors and teaching staff usually have different qualifications and experience, and their roles are seen as quite distinct. At present there are approximately twice as many outdoor instructors employed at centres than teaching staff (Centre for Leisure Research 1995, p.20), in part, because the pupil to staff ratio in many outdoor pursuits is high. There is also an increasing number of newly qualified outdoor instructors, as courses in outdoor activities proliferate. This glut of outdoor instructors, as it has been seen in Chapter Four, has led to an increase in the number of freelance operators. The situation may become more acute if professional teaching staff are to assume an even greater role in outdoor programmes. The centre interviews revealed that many instructors are already employed on a part time basis only.

There are, also, environmental considerations. Undoubtedly, field work has a crucial role to play in enhancing environmental awareness, and collaborative work can prove extremely valuable. The Peak District National Park Information and Interpretation Service, for example, works in partnership with the Youth

Hostels' Association to provide day and residential visits for school and student groups. The aim of these visits is to *'raise awareness and understanding and give people the skills and motivation to contribute to the sustainable management of the National Park and the wider environment'* (Peak District National Park Authority 1995, p.1). Given the widespread concern, however, over the impact of group activities in National Parks, perhaps more field work could be carried out closer to schools. Within the National Curriculum, schools are sometimes advised to investigate the local environment and, as Young People's Access to Outdoor Learning Experiences points out, there is little generally throughout the National Curriculum Orders to encourage fieldwork experience away from local areas (Countryside Commission 1994). Locally based field work could perhaps be used as a first step to the study of National Parks. Many local authorities own at least one study centre, and many of these are within the local education authority boundary. Questionnaire comments show that the majority of groups travel long distances to reach outdoor centres and that some schools are, in any case, switching to centres closer to home to cut down on travel costs and journey times.

The use of local provision could certainly be justified in terms of sustainability. The need to incorporate sustainable development principles into leisure provision is emphasised in Sustainable Development. The UK Strategy (Her Majesty's Government 1994), and recent years have seen a sea change in policy decisions. Local authorities, for example, appear to be placing more emphasis on locating new facilities in the most accessible locations, providing greater integration between modes of transport, and increasing dual use of facilities (Elson 1998). Perhaps, then, the 'special qualities' of the National Parks should be reserved for those outdoor adventurous activities which cannot, by virtue of the natural resources required, take place elsewhere (see also Chapter Seven).

Primary versus Secondary Schools

A review of outdoor adventure programmes in Why Adventure? The Role and Value of Outdoor Adventure in Young People's Personal and Social Development suggests that young people of secondary school age are at least as likely to benefit from outdoor learning experiences, including wilderness experiences, as any other group (Barrett 1995). In young people at risk, for example,

'School....enrichment programmes using developmental activities which appeal to young people, may help to reduce the prevalence of adverse factors in young people's lives (for example, school failure, bullying, teenage pregnancy, intra-familial conflict, removal to residential care settings)'

(Barrett 1995, p.50).

However, the sharp increase in primary school visits to outdoor centres, often at the expense of secondary groups, is effectively denying older pupils the opportunity for outdoor learning, a situation which is often contrary to local authority entitlement curricula and to local authority policies of equitable access.

It is acknowledged that access to outdoor opportunities may be hindered in adolescents and some of the constraints have been discussed in Chapter One.

The National Curriculum and its Assessment states,

'In the primary school, the teacher is greatly helped by the natural enthusiasm, openness and curiosity of young children. Secondary school pupils may well, however, have lost some of this innate enthusiasm, and motivation becomes an issue. As they grow older, they are likely to develop their own particular interests and inspirations. We need to recognise their emerging abilities and aspirations if we are to motivate each and every one of our pupils'

(Dearing 1994, p.18).

Centre interviewees indicated that centre staff are often more willing to get involved in outdoor learning exercises with younger children because of their

eagerness to learn, and because of the noticeable change in classroom dynamics following the residential experience. Similar observations have been made elsewhere: The Countryside Commission's research on young people's learning experiences suggests, for example, that countryside rangers feel more confident working with primary school pupils and, by inference, will be more likely to encourage visits by these groups (Countryside Commission 1994).

The interviews revealed the difficulties in trying to address the imbalance between primary and secondary school visits, in part, because of centre reliance on repeat and early bookings. Primary schools often find it easier to arrange visits because the whole school year is usually involved. They tend to book earlier in the year and to make provisional bookings for the following year. Repeat visits ease the administrative process and strengthen the relationship between centre owners and their staff, and visiting groups. They also dispense with the need to publicise and promote courses to other schools. Many centres, especially within the public sector, are operating at capacity levels and could not accommodate more groups without expanding their facilities or turning regular clients away. It would appear, from other studies, that the current provision only caters for a small proportion of pupils across the whole educational system, and that the majority of schools would like to be able to offer their pupils more opportunities for outdoor learning (Taverner 1994, Countryside Commission 1994).

Schools versus Other User Groups

Attempts made by centres within the public and voluntary sectors to broaden their activity and client base have resulted in a number of operational changes including,

- management restructuring, such as the employment of financial and business managers, to develop a more commercially-oriented profile,
- revision of market policies, including the active targeting of different market

- sectors, to attract potential customers,
- the improvement of facilities, such as private and en-suite rooms, to meet customer demands for better quality provision,
 - changes in opening periods, for example, extended weekend and holiday opening, to accommodate non-educational groups,
 - employment of additional staff, often on a temporary contract or freelance basis, to cope with the increase in visitor numbers or new courses,
 - re-training of existing staff to meet the needs and demands of different user groups,
 - changes in course content and structure to meet client requirements.

It would appear, therefore, that centre diversification is slowly altering the fundamental nature of outdoor provision and is compounding the problems of accessibility faced by young people.

This assertion is borne out by an examination of the Youth Hostels' Association (YHA) which has over 268,000 members, an annual turnover of approximately £26 million (YHA 1996a p.2), and, as the questionnaire survey shows, owns almost one third of outdoor centres within the voluntary sector. At the time of writing, it was estimated that approximately 70% of all YHA visitors comprised school groups (YHA - personal communication 02.04.98.). The organisation was established in 1930 to,

'help all, especially young people of limited means, to a greater knowledge, love and care of the countryside, particularly by providing hostels or other simple means of accommodation for them in their travels and thus to promote their health, rest and education'

(YHA 1996a, p.2)

The achievement of this aim, in the 1990s, seems to be increasingly problematic. The growth in informal group activity, particularly amongst adults, together with calls for better quality provision, and the need to maintain financial viability, has led the Youth Hostels' Association to upgrade its facilities and to focus on a number of key market segments, in particular foreign tourists and informal groups. Resources are, for example, being channelled into city hostels in an attempt to entice more visitors from overseas. Family and group holidays are becoming an increasingly important component of the organisation's business, accounting for 38% of the total number of visitors in 1995/1996. Provision for groups is being met through such schemes as 'Rent a Hostel', which enables groups to have the sole use of smaller hostels for a weekend or longer. This scheme now includes 55 centres i.e. 32% of the Youth Hostels' Association's total provision (YHA 1996b). There are some concerns, within the organisation, that not only are these changes leading to significant increases in centre charges and a reduction in the general level of provision, but also that hostels are being used as a cheap alternative to other types of holiday accommodation rather than providing for 'young people of limited means' (YHA - personal communication 02.07.96.).

There is evidence to suggest that the changes taking place across outdoor centres, especially the growth in short non-educational courses, is eroding opportunities for environmental education. As the Centre for Leisure Research points out,

'If the purpose of the visit is part of an educational field trip, there is often an expectation that formal learning processes will be part of the programme...On less formal trips, for recreation or holidays...if some clients are to be encouraged to take an interest in learning about the environment, it sometimes has to be achieved using a more subtle approach'

(Centre for Leisure Research 1995, p.52)

Adopting a 'subtle approach' to environmental education may, however, require more time with, and understanding of, client groups than the increasingly short courses and higher turnover of staff allow. It also assumes some level of interest on the part of the participant. As Outdoor Activity Centres in Wales indicates,

however, a significant number of participants have little interest in their own impact on the environment, not to mention other, more general, environmental issues (Centre for Leisure Research 1995, p.53).

Other Educational Programmes

Little mention has been made so far about educational and developmental programmes outside of GCSEs and the National Curriculum, and yet a significant number of young people take part in these. There exist, for example, a range of vocational qualifications including National Vocational Qualifications and General National Vocational Qualifications. Approximately one quarter of young people take GCE A-levels and one in three now enter higher education (Office for National Statistics 1998, p.57). Although there are opportunities, in all of these areas, to pursue interests in sport and recreation, the majority of students tend to choose main stream subjects. Physical education, for example, appears to assume a relatively low priority in many colleges of further education (Hunt 1989) and, as this study shows, further education groups make up only 6% of main user groups across all outdoor centres.

Vast numbers of young people belong to organisations within the Youth Service (see, for example, Countryside Commission 1994), whose Statement of Purpose aims,

'to redress all forms of inequality and to ensure equality of opportunity for all young people to fulfil their potential as empowered individuals and members of groups and communities and to support young people during their transition to adulthood'

(National Youth Bureau 1990 p.21)

The importance of the Youth Service, especially its ability to offer young people opportunities for outdoor learning, is widely acknowledged. Its role in facilitating such opportunities is, however, discretionary. At present, youth groups make up approximately one fifth of centre users, in the 14-18 age bracket. The increasing use of centres for field studies, the growth in primary school

visits, and the continuing need to diversify is, however, beginning to threaten this sector of the youth market.

6.5 Concluding Remarks

The Education Reform Act 1988 has been significant, not only for the changes brought about by the introduction of the National Curriculum and local management of schools, but also because it has marked a turning point from a system of educational welfare to one dominated by market principles. Parents and schools are now choosing between different types of educational services. Outdoor centres are competing for custom. Educational establishments are, through performance indicators, becoming more accountable.

Ironically, the measures intended to increase autonomy and choice have been overshadowed by the demands of the Curriculum, which is tending to dictate the direction and extent of outdoor learning programmes. The rise in field studies, as a direct consequence of Curriculum requirements, has been at the expense of outdoor activities per se. Pupils' opportunities to take part in outdoor activities have, therefore, declined. Because of the punishing timetable imposed by the Curriculum, secondary school visits to outdoor centres have also fallen. The priorities now being given to primary groups means that this situation is becoming even more acute. The ability of schools to 'buy into' services, and centre efforts to become financially viable, have not just led, as the reforms were undoubtedly intended, to greater choice and increased efficiency of operations, but have forced centres to seek out other markets. Schools are, therefore, not only competing against themselves for centre places (if, indeed, residential courses are even on their agenda), but are also competing against different market sectors. Young people in general, from school pupils to youth groups, are losing out as centres establish more lucrative courses. Local authority centres have the added difficulty of trying to operate under market principles whilst being constrained by public policy, including their commitment to local authority schools.

The changes that are taking place have implications for centre resources. If the current trends continue, the adequacy of existing facilities and suitability of centre staff will be severely tested. At a wider level, the rise in field studies begs the question about the appropriateness of different types of activity in National Parks. As it will be seen from the next chapter, which examines the impact of environmental and planning policies on opportunities for outdoor adventure, this issue is, itself, far from resolved.

CHAPTER SEVEN - THE IMPACT OF PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES ON OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUTDOOR ADVENTURE

7.1 Introduction

The land use planning system provides a framework within which leisure policies are developed and implemented and the pattern of outdoor provision is determined. It is, as Healey (1993) points out, central to the environmental agenda because it uses regulatory power to contribute to the management of environmental change. It offers an ideal opportunity, therefore, to link decisions about land use allocations and development to economic, social and environmental considerations. It has always embraced the principles which have become associated with sustainability, namely environmental protection, equity and futurity. Indeed, it has a legitimate interest in sustainable development - the system is designed '*to regulate the development and use of land in the public interest*' (Department of the Environment 1997b, p.7). The National Parks, according to the Government, have a particularly important part to play in providing a role model for the sustainable management of the wider countryside (Department of the Environment 1996).

The aim of this chapter is to examine the ways in which planning and environmental policies have affected the outdoor sector. It starts by 1) outlining the provisions of the Environment Act 1995 as they relate to National Parks, 2) introducing the concept and principles of sustainability and, 3) providing a thumb nail sketch of the planning policy documents which lay the foundations for recreation provision. It then goes on to explore the ways in which policies have influenced both the development of outdoor provision and the general nature of activities, by focusing on some of the main trends emerging from the study. It concludes by discussing the opportunities that these policies bring, and by highlighting some of the problems that have arisen in attempting their implementation.

7.2 The Environment Act, Sustainable Development and the Planning System

The Environment Act 1995

Government policy on National Parks is contained within the Environment Act 1995 Part III National Parks (Her Majesty's Government 1995). This Act, whilst consolidating earlier legislation, also made fundamental changes to the control and management of the designated areas (An analysis of the provisions of the Act can be found in Lane and Peto 1995).

The Act introduced revised National Park purposes namely, ..

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

The Act enshrined the recommendations made by the National Park Policies Review Committee, by stating that, in cases of conflict between National Park purposes, priority must be given to the purpose of conservation (National Park Policies Review Committee 1974). It also created new National Park Authorities (NPAs) to act as the sole planning authorities for the designated areas.

Sustainable Development

The concept of sustainable development was introduced in response to concern that economic development was increasingly damaging ecological systems (for a comprehensive account of the background to, and developments in, the sustainability debate see, for example, Lowe 1993, Jacobs 1991, House of Lords' Select Committee 1995). Sustainable development has been defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) as, '*meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to*

meet their own needs' (WCED 1987, p.43). It is based on a number of principles. These can be summarised as,

- taking greater account of the environment in all its functions, namely life support, assimilative capacity, and provision of natural resources
- building into the concept of development elements which reflect people's quality of life
- recognising the importance of the needs of both existing and future generations (Elson 1998).

The 1990 White Paper on the Environment, This Common Inheritance. Britain's Environmental Strategy, identified, as a challenge for the future, the need to integrate environmental considerations into economic and recreational policies for the countryside (Her Majesty's Government 1990). In response to the 1992 United Nations conference on environment and development, the so-called 'Earth Summit', and the Agenda 21 Action Plan, the Government further produced Sustainable Development. The UK Strategy, which includes a framework for sustainable leisure development (Her Majesty's Government 1994).

Land Use Planning

National Park Authorities in England are responsible, under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, for developing land use planning policies through the preparation of Structure and Local Plans. They also have responsibility for development control within their boundaries. The Structure Plan sets out broad policies for a range of issues including conservation of the natural and built environment, recreation, tourism, housing, economic development, and transport. Local Plans interpret and amplify Structure Plan policies at the local level. The National Park Authorities are also required, under the Environment Act 1995, to produce a National Park Management Plan which contains strategic objectives

and policies for managing the National Parks. (For a full account of the planning and management functions of the National Park Authorities see, for example, the Countryside Commission 1997).

In Wales, each National Park Authority is required, under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Local Government (Wales) Act 1994, to prepare a Unitary Development Plan for its area, combining the functions of Structure and Local Plans into one document. The Welsh National Park Authorities are also responsible for development control functions within the National Park boundaries. It should be noted that, at the time of writing, Unitary Development Plans were not available for the Brecon Beacons and Snowdonia National Parks. Reference is therefore made, in the following sections, to existing Structure and Local Plans.

7.3 The Influence of Planning and Environmental Policies in Shaping Outdoor Provision

The study findings show that, whilst environmental and planning policies have influenced both the development and operation of outdoor centres, they have had little impact, overall, on the type of outdoor activities undertaken. Thus,

1. *The creation of opportunities for recreation and outdoor learning has led to the establishment, over many years, of a network of outdoor centres in the National Parks*

The postal questionnaire of outdoor centres shows that, even before the Second World War, a significant number of outdoor centres had been established. Since the 1950s, over 130 centres have been opened, an average of 2-3 per annum. The establishment of centres reached a peak in the late 1960s when 32 centres were opened.

The development of outdoor provision stems from the access, youth and education movements of the early part of the twentieth century which encouraged countryside recreation and exploration of the natural environment.

The Access Movement - Typified by such organisations as the Open Spaces Society and the Ramblers' Association, the access movement was instrumental in the campaign for National Parks. The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, which defined National Parks as extensive areas of beautiful and wild countryside designated '*to preserve and enhance their beauty and to promote their enjoyment by the public*', led to the increasing recreational use of these upland areas which offered a challenging environment for outdoor pursuits. In becoming the focus for outdoor activities, the National Parks also became a prime location for outdoor centres which could be used as a convenient base to access the surrounding areas (Dartington Amenity Research Trust 1980).

The Youth Movement - The early part of the century also saw the growth of the youth movement in Britain. The Youth Hostels' Association, for example, aimed not only to offer cheap accommodation in the countryside, but also to provide self-education for young people through self-reliance and communal activities. Other organisations, such as the Scout Association and Boys' Brigade had similar educational objectives. Once again, the uplands provided an ideal environment for the activities of these organisations, which were often based on exploration, expedition and physical challenge. The newly designated National Parks, with their '*wild and open country*', became the focus for activity. The questionnaire survey identified no fewer than 44 youth hostels, and 7 outdoor centres owned by the Scout and Guide Associations. Groups of young people undertaking expeditions, especially for the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, often use outdoor centres as a base. The significance of these activities is reflected in the number of participants in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme which rose from 122,000 to 200,000 between 1971 and 1992 (Central Statistical Office 1994, p. 143).

Educational Reform - The role of educational institutions in outdoor learning, and the nation-wide growth of public sector centres, has already been seen. Many of these centres are situated in the National Parks which provide, not only a challenging environment for outdoor pursuits, but also a wealth of spectacular resources for field studies. The study has identified no fewer than 31 local education authority centres across the National Parks. Many of these were established during the 1960s, when large country properties were relatively cheap, and were adapted for educational use. A number of centres are privately owned by schools and colleges.

2. *The current pattern of outdoor provision is increasingly determined by development plan policies*

The National Parks, then, have been an increasingly popular venue for a wide range of outdoor activities for many years, and the outdoor sector has enjoyed a relatively unhindered period of expansion. Since the 1970s, however, the pattern of development appears to have been increasingly determined by planning policies, as concerns over the impact of outdoor centres have increased, and planning authorities have sought to maintain a balance between economic, social and environmental interests.

a) *Development plan policies on outdoor provision vary across National Parks*

Some National Park Authorities have welcomed the development of outdoor centres as a means of providing uses for redundant buildings, contributing to local economies, and enabling the effective management of outdoor activities. Others have positively discouraged centre development because of the potential adverse impacts on local environments and communities. The following sections, which are based on the analysis of National Park planning policies, show how the different National Park Authorities have reacted.

The Peak District

The Peak District National Park Authority, through its Structure Plan policies, is keen to promote its nationally and regionally significant resources and to encourage recreation and tourism development provided that *'it relates to quiet enjoyment and activities dependent upon the use of the natural and physical characteristics of the area'* (Peak Park Joint Planning Board 1994, p.70). Similarly, the Local Plan concedes that small scale developments and changes to existing facilities are acceptable where they do not conflict with the quiet enjoyment of the National Park (Peak District National Park Authority 1997). The 1989 National Park Plan supports the further provision of hostel and outdoor study accommodation especially when linked to the preservation of a traditional building which would otherwise be at risk, or in areas where employment at such centres would be a useful source of additional income. In considering proposals for new hostels, *'The Board will seek to ensure that their site selection, design and management minimises problems to local communities and has no adverse impact on the character and quality of surrounding areas'* (Peak Park Joint Planning Board 1989, p.123).

The National Park Plan is currently under review. At the time of writing, it is not known whether the National Park Authority's policies for outdoor centre provision will change. The Authority is keen, however, to increase the level of overnight stays within the Park providing that this does not conflict with National Park objectives (Peak Park Joint Planning Board 1994).

Dartmoor

The Dartmoor National Park Authority also encourages outdoor provision, although adopts a slightly more cautious approach. The Structure Plan, for example, is in favour of development only where *'it would protect scenic beauty, wildlife, heritage, promote quiet enjoyment and understanding, and be necessary in the interest of fostering social and economic well-being'* (Devon County Council 1995, p. 33). Conversions and extensions, it states, may be acceptable.

The Local Plan accepts that a wide range of accommodation is desirable and that building conversions, sympathetic in character and design to local conditions, will be allowed (Dartmoor National Park Authority 1996). The Dartmoor National Park Authority, like the Peak Park Authority, is keen to accommodate a wide range of activities and to make use of its special resources. The National Park Plan places much emphasis on managing activities and influencing behaviour, especially in young people. With regard to residential centres,

'opportunities to indulge in face to face instruction, message giving and discussion with parties of young people, will be taken wherever possible'

(Dartmoor National Park Authority 1991, p.64).

The Lake District

Lake District Structure Plan policies allow for tourism development which does not conflict with the quiet enjoyment of the area and *'does not introduce inappropriate activities or significant additional numbers of visitors likely to have an adverse impact on the site or surrounding area'* (Cumbria County Council and the Lake District National Park Authority 1995, p.50). Local Plan policies acknowledge the need to provide simple and relatively cheap accommodation. The Local Plan thus encourages the conversion of traditional buildings to camping barns, hostels and outdoor centres where the proposals will not adversely affect landscape, residential amenity, nature conservation, or archaeological interests, and where the conversion will not adversely affect the character of the building (Lake District Special Planning Board 1994). Management Plan policies, similarly, give a cautious welcome to the expansion of outdoor provision through new provision and building conversion. The 1986 Lake District Management Plan recognised *'the desirability of securing several modest sized hostels to fill gaps in the network'* (Lake District Special Planning Board 1986, p.6). In relation to outdoor centres it stated that,

'Use through a properly staffed centre, whose personnel both know the area and provide a known point of contact, is preferable to casual group visits. Applications for new and enlarged centres will be judged on the impacts both of the development itself and of the likely subsequent activities on the surrounding area and on the local community

(i.b.i.d., p.6).

The revised Management Plan of 1997 makes no direct reference, within its development control policies, to outdoor centres. Rather, it states its readiness to support development which does not conflict with the quiet enjoyment of the Park and does not introduce inappropriate activity. There is an implicit endorsement of outdoor centres through the Authority's statement that centres *'provide a point of contact which makes it easier to resolve management issues'* (Lake District National Park Authority 1997, p. 27).

The North York Moors

The Structure Plan for North Yorkshire states that provision for recreational, leisure and cultural facilities will only be made where it is compatible with the need to preserve the landscape, and that there will be a presumption against new development or major extensions to existing developments (North Yorkshire County Council 1996). Policies for tourism encourage only small scale developments which are appropriate in type and design. The Local Plan recognises the popularity of walking, cycling and riding holidays, and the need for simple and relatively cheap accommodation linked to National Trails and Regional Routes. It welcomes opportunities for the conversion of redundant buildings and for new trekking and equestrian centres (North York Moors National Park Authority 1992). The Park Authority appear to be in favour, in principle, of the establishment of outdoor centres, the Management Plan, for example, stating that *'outdoor activity centres provide a valuable resource for countryside and water based recreation and environmental education'* (North York Moors National Park Authority 1991, p.54).

The Brecon Beacons

A far less positive approach is adopted in the Brecon Beacons. Thus, the Powys County Structure Plan points out that the growth in the outdoor holiday business, encouraged by the Welsh Tourist Board, and grant schemes such as farm diversification, have led to recreational pressures,

'Some problems arise...where the numbers participating in outdoor recreation or the nature of specialised activities are coming into conflict with the environment or with the local community. Within the National Park...many areas are experiencing this syndrome, especially with respect to pony trekking and outdoor activity centres'

(Powys County Planning Department 1994, p.134).

It goes on to state that,

'The further development of outdoor activity centres in or within easy walking of those areas defined as 'pressure areas' or vulnerable areas' ...will not be permitted

(i.b.i.d.).

The Local Plan draws attention to the problems caused from intensive use of some parts of the Park by outdoor centres and states its intention to use planning controls, where appropriate, to manage the growth and activities of these centres. The Park Authority further states its intention to require details of the types of pursuits involved, and the areas where these will be followed. Proposals to create a new residential centre or hostel, or to extend an existing one, will only be permitted if the development is within a settlement or uses an existing building (Brecon Beacons National Park Authority 1996). The National Park Plan whilst appearing to be in favour, in principle, of outdoor education and outdoor pursuits centres, providing that 1) they utilise existing buildings, 2) they make use of the Park's natural resources, and 3) they do not have a detrimental effect on local residents, goes on to say that, in practice, the capacity for additional centres is limited (Brecon Beacons National Park Authority 1993).

Snowdonia

An even harsher view is taken in Snowdonia. Thus, despite recommendations made in the Tourism and Recreation Policy Paper (Gwynedd County Council 1984), to relax controls on wardened centres, the Gwynedd Structure Plan indicates that the current provision of outdoor centres '*represents a reasonable maximum*' and that,

'The establishment of further outdoor pursuit centres and an increase in the number of bed spaces in existing centres...which would demonstrably increase pressure on the Park's natural resources and environment will not be permitted'

(Gwynedd County Council 1993 p.10).

The Local Plan takes a similar tack. Thus, whilst admitting, 1) that the numbers using outdoor centres are relatively small, 2) that they provide some local employment, and 3) that they can further the interests of good environmental management, it also points to their potential impact. The National Park Authority acknowledges that some centres are better managed than others. It expresses frustration, however, that it is not allowed to discriminate between centres, which leads it to impose a blanket ban on further development. Only in exceptional circumstances will the Authority consider applications for new centres or for extensions when the closure or rationalisation of existing centres takes place (Snowdonia National Park Authority 1995). Equally, the Snowdonia National Park Plan reiterates the need for restrictive policies on environmental grounds. It argues that the economic benefits of outdoor centres are being reduced through the purchase of goods and services outside of the local area. It draws attention to the proliferation of centres adjacent to the National Park and to the increasing problem of year round pressure (Snowdonia National Park Authority 1986).

b) *The differences, across Parks, in planning policies, appears to have led to some differences in the level and nature of outdoor provision*

As the previous sections have shown, National Park policies relating to the development and management of outdoor activity centres vary. Some Park plans positively encourage further provision, others have made clear that development will not normally be permitted. The effect of these policies can be seen in practice. The postal questionnaire responses show, for example, that, since 1980, the Peak Park, Dartmoor and the Lake District, all of which have acknowledged the need for outdoor facilities have experienced a significant growth in outdoor centres (22%, 37% and 31% of responding centres in these Parks respectively have opened since this time). In the Welsh National Parks, however, where policies are more restrictive, a different picture emerges. No centres, for example, appear to have been opened in the Brecon Beacons National Park since the late 1970s, and of the 5 centres established in Snowdonia since 1980, 2 are run from private residences and one is owned by the Ministry of Defence. The difference in centre development could, perhaps, be attributed to other factors, in particular a difference in demand for provision. It would appear, however, that centres, across all Parks, are already very busy.

Interviews with centre managers revealed that, in accord with planning policies, many of the recently opened centres have been established in existing buildings and often in redundant farm buildings. This type of development is not new, however. As the questionnaire survey indicated, 66% of all centres established since the early 1900s have been converted from other uses. Indeed, only 21 out of the total sample of 188 responding centres have been purpose built.

An examination of planning applications was not undertaken as part of the empirical research and it is not known, therefore, how many, if any, applications for new centres have been refused. Of the 24 managers interviewed, one had recently been refused permission to extend his premises on the grounds of landscape impact. Furthermore, it cannot be assumed that centres necessarily want to expand: Interviews with centre managers suggest, for example, that

although some centres are small and have very basic provision, they are regarded as perfectly adequate by visiting groups. However, a larger proportion of centres have increased their overall capacity in those Parks which have adopted a less restrictive approach to centre development. Across all Parks, for example, bed spaces have increased in 20 centres and in 8 of these, notably in the Peak Park and Dartmoor, capacities have risen by 50-90%. The expansion of centres has allowed for improvement in facilities, such as larger kitchens, better changing and drying rooms, and further study rooms. None of the centres in Snowdonia reported an increase in bed spaces in the last 10 years. Rather than invest in building extensions, some centres have extended their opening periods. The growing demand for better quality provision, including en-suite rooms and private rooms, has led to centre improvements which, in some cases, has actually reduced the overall centre capacity.

3. *The growth in new forms of sport and active recreation, and concerns over the impact of these activities, has made little difference to the type of activities undertaken from outdoor centres and the sites used*

Recent years, it has already been indicated, have seen a rapid rise in new forms of sport and active recreation. The National Parks Review Panel, in its report Fit for the Future, estimated that the number of people taking part in active pursuits in National Parks, from climbing to motorcycling, had doubled during the 1980s and, by 1991, represented about one in five of all visitors (National Parks Review Panel 1991, p.35). In the light of the 1994 All Parks Visitor Survey it would appear that walking is still by far the most popular outdoor activity undertaken by visitors (Centre for Leisure Research and JMP Consultants Ltd 1995), although a diverse number of other outdoor pursuits do take place (Appendix 1).

The National Parks Review Panel suggested that the growing number of visitors participating in organised and active forms of recreation had heightened the perception of visitor pressure in National Parks. It questioned the appropriateness of these new activities and highlighted the problems of securing

suitable sites:

'The forms of outdoor recreation to be encouraged in National Parks should only be those which involve the quiet enjoyment of the areas...noisy and intrusive recreational activities should be permitted only on sites where they cause no undue annoyance to the Park users and no lasting environmental damage to the fabric of the park itself'

(National Parks Review Panel 1991, p.36).

There is unanimous support, amongst National Park Authorities, for this approach. Thus, most planning policies encourage activities which 1) involve quiet enjoyment, 2) do not conflict with conservation interests, the enjoyment of other users, or the interests of local residents, and 3) depend upon the natural resources of the Parks - resources which may be scarce elsewhere.

The type of activities which are looked upon favourably vary from caving and rock climbing to horse riding and cycling. The Dartmoor National Park Authority, -for example, acknowledges that Dartmoor provides an ideal environment for a wide range of pursuits:

'Some activities are, in principle, entirely appropriate in the National Park. They may, like climbing, canoeing or caving, be geographically tied to certain locations...or...like letterboxing, orienteering, mountain biking, or the Ten Tors, rely on the extent of challenging terrain which Dartmoor offers...'

(Dartmoor National Park Authority 1991, p.47).

Some National Park Authorities, like the Peak Park and Lake District, specify the activities which they consider inappropriate in the National Parks in their development and management plans. Commonly, these include such pursuits as motorcross, scrambling, rallying, off-road motoring, power boating, water skiing, target shooting, and intensive clay pigeon shooting (see, for example, Peak Park Joint Planning Board 1989).

The activities which are commonly undertaken by centre visitors are largely in tune with National Park policies and are based on the special qualities of the

Parks (see also Chapter Four). 86% of all questionnaire respondents, for example, indicated that walking was one of the most popular activities undertaken from centres, and over one half of respondents referred to climbing and canoeing. Some activities, including expeditions, make particular use of the open and wild nature of these upland areas and draw on resources which are specific to some geographical areas. Thus, water sports are commonly undertaken from centres in the Lake District, many of which have private access to the lake shores, whilst caving and climbing are particularly popular in the Peak District. The widespread popularity of these pursuits appears not to have changed over the last 20 years (Dartington Amenity Research Trust 1980).

There was little evidence from the study to suggest that activities, especially noisy activities, which may be incompatible with National Park purposes, are undertaken by centre visitors within the designated areas. One centre has a go-kart track, but this is adjacent to a trunk road. Another centre organises activities including tank driving, assault courses and clay pigeon shooting, but outside of the Park boundary.

Sites are used, across all Parks, because they are easily accessible (83% of respondents) or because they provide the best resource (73% of respondents). Some sites, such as the Roaches and Stanage in the Peak District, were recorded by a number of questionnaire respondents and have, like the activities they support, been popular for many years. Many of these sites are the subject of management plans which are used as a tool to manage potentially conflicting recreational interests.

4. Increasingly, landowners are charging for access to activity sites

There are indications that the organisers of, or participants in, outdoor activities are increasingly being charged for access to sites. Centre interviews revealed that some centres have had informal agreements with landowners for many years. These centres often pay a nominal fee, each year, for access to natural resources,

such as climbing crags, on privately-owned land. Increasingly, however, landowners, including private individuals, water companies, the Forestry Authority and even local authorities are imposing charges, or threatening to introduce charges, either for parking facilities near to sites, or for the use of sites themselves. Car parking fees are often being justified in terms of the additional security measures that can be introduced, such as car park patrols, in areas where car theft and vandalism are becoming commonplace. Car parking fees are often introduced in preference to site fees, to avoid the issue of liability in the case of accident or injury.

A number of managers, including those already paying to use sites, appear to have little objection to the principle of payment for access, especially when security is increased. It would seem, however, that the majority do object, both to the principle of payment, and to the fact that additional facilities, such as toilets and changing rooms, are not provided. There is concern amongst managers that some groups (specific reference was made by 4 interviewees to the armed forces) can afford to pay for access and are, increasingly, offering to do so. Some user groups and centre operators have sought alternative sites to avoid paying fees. This can mean travelling considerable distances, in some cases over 20 miles, from the centre base.

National Park Authorities are beginning to acknowledge the issue of access payments in planning policy documents. The Lake District National Park Authority, for example, makes clear that fees should be levied solely to cover landowner costs rather than pay for access per se. It further emphasises that although the potential exists for organised bodies to negotiate access to land, in return for payment, for their own recreational use *'negotiation of access by a particular interest group should not unreasonably preclude access arrangements for the public at large or for different pursuits'* (Lake District National Park Authority 1997, p.27).

7.4 The Implications of Policy - Effective Planning, Legitimate Activities and Sustainability Principles

It has been revealed how planning and environmental policies have, at different times, encouraged or constrained the development of outdoor facilities, often in the interests of sustainability. Doubts still remain, however, over the effectiveness of such policies in the distribution of resources, the enhancement of environmental quality and, ultimately, the achievement of sustainability goals.

1. Questions arise over the effectiveness of the planning system to ensure the equitable allocation of leisure resources

According to Jacobs (1991), the principles of sustainability can be achieved by 'entrenching' the environmental agenda within the planning system and by allowing planners to shape the location of development, to accommodate particular types of development, and to promote certain qualities in development.

Planners are, however, faced with a number of problems:

Lack of regulatory power

A large number of informal activities do not constitute development or change of use. So, even though, as the Peak Park Local Plan makes clear, recreational activities '*once considered solely a matter for land management are increasingly seen as land uses to be controlled by the planning system or to be considered when judging new uses*' (Peak District National Park Authority 1997, p.49), the powers of planning authorities in such areas are limited. In addition, some types of sport and recreation do not require planning permission, under permitted development rights, if they operate for less than 14 days (e.g. motor sports) or 28 days (e.g. hang-gliding and clay pigeon shooting). The National Park Authorities have little control over the activities of neighbouring planning authorities which, in Snowdonia, has led to the proliferation of centres adjacent to the National Park and exacerbated the pressures within it (Snowdonia National Park Authority

1986). Neither do planning authorities have any powers over marine waters surrounding coastlines and no jurisdiction, therefore, over activities, including noisy and intrusive activities, taking place below the low water mark. This inability to control, effectively, the majority of activities, has led to the spontaneous growth of outdoor pursuits, often in places where they are seen as least desirable. Site management measures are often retrospective and piecemeal. The hostilities which such activities can arouse, as it will be seen later, are often directed at groups, including groups of young people, using outdoor centres.

Lack of information

In encouraging recreational activities, the Government has acknowledged the need to plan for leisure (Department of the Environment 1992, Para 3). It is argued, however, that planners do not adequately address the demand for, and supply of, sport and recreation provision, that strategic planning policies are based on a poor empirical understanding of participation patterns, and that, where empirical studies are cited in plans, they often draw on national data or site surveys which have limited value at county level (Curry 1993, Wilkinson and Elson 1996). The lack of empirical data has led to a misfounded presumption of continued growth in sporting and recreational activities, and an assumption that increased participation will lead to environmental damage. This, in turn, has led local planning authorities to adopt a position of defence and to develop policies of constraint in order to avoid environmental impact and to avert conflict with other interest groups.

These arguments are, to some extent, borne out by the study findings. There is, for example, no nationally available data base on outdoor activity centres or their users. Discussions with National Park officers suggest that information on activities undertaken from outdoor centres is sketchy and, as it has been seen, a significant number of centres, across all Parks, have no links with the Park Authorities. In Snowdonia, policies for outdoor centres are based largely on the findings of the Dartington Amenity Research Trust study Groups in the Countryside which was conducted 20 years ago. Not only were leisure patterns

quite different in the late 1970s, but also when a list of activity centres was compiled for this study, many of the centres listed in the Research Trust's report could not be traced. It has to be assumed, therefore, that they are no longer in operation.

Lack of Involvement

The planning system provides an arena for public participation in policy formulation and implementation and, according to the United Nations (1993), must involve young people in the decision-making process, if the long term success of Agenda 21 is to be assured. The United Nations recommends that governments should,

- enable consultation with, and participation of, young people,
- promote dialogue with youth organisations,
- expand educational opportunities, including education for environmental and developmental responsibility,
- incorporate children's concerns over the allocation of, and entitlement to, natural resources.

The attainment of these objectives are, however, problematic. As Smith (1995) argues,

'It is questionable...within the context of the growing legalisation and formalisation of the planning process whether it is actually procedurally, linguistically and financially accessible to the majority of adults in the wider community, let alone children'

(p.231)

Certainly, the study provides little evidence to show that young people's opinions are being sought in the planning and provision of facilities for outdoor activities.

Lack of organisational power and insight

At a much wider level, there are, according to Healey (1993), other difficulties in meeting the demands of sustainable development, because of,

- the highly centralised nature of the planning system (which is critically

- dependent on attitudes and objectives of government ministers and civil servants),
- the discretionary nature of the planning system (which leaves scope to interpret environmental objectives in a way convenient to dominant interests),
 - the fragmentation of responsibilities for environmental issues throughout a wide range of agencies,
 - a lack of planning power to regulate public sector development,
 - a lack of understanding, on the part of planners, as to how environmental issues can be incorporated into plans
 - a lack of technical expertise to measure the impact of development.

Thus concerns about the power of public sector bureaucrats and the ability of local planning authorities to shape the policy agenda re-emerge (see Chapter One).

2. *Policies for rural diversification can open up opportunities for participation in outdoor activities, but the long term implications of diversification schemes must be considered*

Some of the development plan policies outlined in earlier sections have been formulated in the light of government policies for rural diversification. The National Parks Review Panel, in its report Fit for the Future, recommends that National Park Authorities support diversification which contributes to the maintenance of farm businesses without jeopardising National Park purposes (National Parks Review Panel 1991). Indeed, it is now widely acknowledged that some initiatives, such as the conversion of traditional farm buildings, can, if carried out sensitively, help to maintain and enhance the character of the landscape. Such conversions provide opportunities for the creation or extension of outdoor centres and, as it has been seen, a number of existing centres have been created or extended, in part, as a result of diversification policies.

Since the early 1980s, a number of National Parks, including the Peak District, Lake District and North York Moors, have been involved in the development of bunkhouse or camping barns. This type of provision was not included in the study analysis (see Chapter Two) but is mentioned here because it raises a number of issues which are common to other types of outdoor centre, and to rural diversification policies in general.

Bunkhouse barns provide one of the most basic built forms of overnight accommodation - a 'stone tent'. Many comprise one or, at most, two rooms with sleeping platforms and cooking area, and can accommodate on average 12-20 people. The standards of accommodation are based on recommendations made by the Department of Education and Science, with the intention that the barns are *'simple, cheap to provide, cheap to use, and cheap and easy to maintain'* (Countryside Commission 1986, p.6).

The popularity of camping barns, particularly with groups of young people, is evidenced by the growing numbers of such groups using the centres each year. Early surveys showed, for example, that the proportion of young people, under 18, using barns in the Peak District increased from 27% in 1983 to 46% in 1984, that one third of visitors were youth groups and the remainder school groups, and that the barns were used, mainly as a base for walking but also for other activities including caving and cycling (Countryside Commission 1986, p.29). Young people remain a significant proportion of user groups (Peak District National Park Authority - personal communication 25.06.98).

The extent to which this provision is used, especially by young people, suggests that there is a demand for cheap and simple accommodation. This type of non-staffed accommodation means, however, that, as with some centres in the study, groups can only use the provision if they have access, through other channels, to group leaders and to outdoor equipment. It also means that the activities undertaken from such centres are less easy to monitor or control. The conversion of farm buildings to centres of any kind, through diversification policies, also

raises issues about the long term maintenance and running costs of such ventures. Interviews with centre managers revealed concerns that centres established with the help of grant aid, for example from the Tourist Boards, may not be financially viable in the long term.

3. Young people taking part in organised activities undertaken from outdoor centres often bear the brunt of hostilities in recreational conflicts

As visits to the countryside have become more popular, so the pressures on natural resources have increased and conflicts amongst interest groups have intensified. Interviews with centre managers revealed that hostilities towards centre users, including groups of young people, often arise because of a perception that organised activities undertaken from outdoor centres are necessarily conducted on a large scale, are poorly organised or supervised, and are noisy.

The questionnaire and interview responses did illustrate that it is not uncommon for school parties of 30 to 40 pupils to be involved in any one type of activity, and for some problems, often associated with noisy behaviour, to occur. As the Lake District National Park Authority (1986) has pointed out,

'...the noise generated by enthusiastic youngsters messing about in rubber dinghies, or on a canoe training course, may be seen as part of the fun in some locations, but is quite capable of shattering the peace and disturbing wildlife elsewhere' (p.8).

The size of group normally involved in centre activities is relatively small, however, when compared to the numbers taking part in organised events such as the Three Peaks Challenge, and the incidences cited in which poor supervision has led to irresponsible behaviour are few (see also Chapter Eight). Furthermore, noisy activities appear to be limited in scale and location, some taking place outside of the National Park boundaries. In short, as it has already been seen, most of the adventurous activities undertaken from outdoor centres appear to be in line, not only with National Park policies relating to both quiet enjoyment and

the experience of remote and challenging environments, but also with the Government notion of sustainable leisure, i.e.

- contributing to the health, well being and quality of life of participants,
 - creating awareness of, and appreciation for, the environment,
 - maintaining the quality of the environment within which leisure takes place
- (Her Majesty's Government 1994).

There would appear to be little justification for the level of hostility which can exist. What is important, however, is that such hostilities can influence planning decisions and, hence, the level of outdoor provision.

4. Charging for access to sites raises the question of equity

Countryside access has always been a contentious issue (see, for example, Shoard 1987, Curry 1994). The access debate has gained new impetus, however, since the Labour Party, in its 1997 Manifesto, announced that, '*Our policies include greater freedom for people to explore our open countryside. We will not, however, permit any abuse of a right to greater access*' and, more recently, with the publication of a consultation paper entitled Access to the Open Countryside in England and Wales (Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions 1998a). A review of over 20 major organisations involved in the access debate has shown that the majority support the use of voluntary agreements and that only a few organisations appear to be in favour of charging policies. These include the British Canoeing Union, the Country Landowners Association and the National Farmers' Union (Carter 1996).

There is, as Curry (1992) points out, a legal basis for charging, including those areas covered by access agreements under the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act. Access to land owned and leased by water companies is chargeable or not, under various provisions of the 1990 Water Act. There are

growing concerns, however, as evidenced from centre interviews, that not only is charging for access becoming more widespread, but also that the principle of charging is being endorsed by both central and local Governments through, for example, agricultural compensation and traffic management schemes.

At the heart of the debate is the issue of equity. Although the countryside is regarded by some as a public good (see, for example, Owens 1992), others suggest that, given public consensus over the principle of 'the polluter pays', the concept can be applied to the use of recreational sites (Toothill 1992). According to Curry (1992), research shows that direct consumer payments, such as those being levied by local authorities on parking facilities, are more equitable than most other forms of charging policies, and are economically efficient, being driven by market supply and demand. Furthermore, although local authority charges raise the issue of whether there is an infringement on the freedom of the mountains,

'local authorities do not really go through the philosophical argument about whether they are in the business of charging for countryside recreation. They are in the very much more mundane business of increasing their budgets'

(Toothill 1992, p. 102)

What is clear from this study is that charging is starting to have an impact on the use of sites. Some centres are seeking alternative sites, usually out of principle or unwillingness to pay. As one manager commented *'the imposition of site fees is just one more outgoing when our resources are already stretched to the limit'*. Those centres which are attempting to keep course fees to a minimum, including those, across all sectors, dealing with school and youth groups, appear to be at a disadvantage.

5. *There is a danger that those involved in providing for outdoor activities are losing sight of the wider concept of sustainability*

The Government in Sustainable Development. The UK Strategy has made clear the role of leisure providers in ensuring that a sustainable approach is translated

from principle into practice (Her Majesty's Government 1994). For outdoor centres, this has involved the introduction of a number of environmentally-friendly measures. Some centres, for example, are making more use of centre grounds for outdoor activities in order to reduce the impact on natural resources. Others are introducing recycling and energy saving schemes. Some have started to limit the distance they travel to activity sites or have reduced the number of vehicles they own. Some centres try to raise the level of environmental awareness in visiting groups. For the National Park Authorities, it has meant favouring policies of environmental protection because 1) the concept of sustainable development is built around the notion of carrying capacity and critical assets and, in the absence of clear definitions and methodologies, authorities are advised to adopt a precautionary approach, and 2) the Authorities have a duty, under the Environment Act 1995, to abide by the Sandford Principle, which gives priority to conservation interests.

These measures raise a number of issues:

1. Centre interviews revealed that most Park Authorities are keen to give consent for equipment such as on-site climbing walls in order to contain activity. The British Mountaineering Council has expressed concern, however, that different skills are required on natural as opposed to artificial surfaces, and that it is only by exposure to the former that novice mountaineers, especially young people, can learn about natural processes and develop a respect for the natural environment (British Mountaineering Council - personal communication 08.07.96.).
2. Energy efficient schemes are highly commendable, but many centres are struggling against the odds, trying to conserve heat in very large, old and draughty country houses.
3. Although centres are trying to cut down on transport costs and usage, a large number cannot be reached by public transport without a supporting pick up

service, and although activity sites are used because they are easily accessible, many cannot be reached on foot or by public transport from the centre.

4. The extent to which environmental measures are undertaken depends largely on the interests and commitment of providers and their clients but this varies from centre to centre (see also Centre for Leisure Research 1995).

The above measures are largely concerned with environmental protection. As Elson (1998) points out, however, there is also a need, as part of the sustainability agenda, to consider the socio-cultural and psychological measures of well-being. In the context of sport and recreation, this might mean involving those affected by decisions in the decision-making process, meeting the needs of resident groups, widening opportunities for the financially or spatially disadvantaged, and respecting environmental qualities such as tranquillity.

As it has been seen this is not always easy. Planners, for example, have not yet resolved the problems of measuring and meeting needs, nor involving the public, especially young people, in the decision-making process. There is some evidence, especially amongst the Welsh centres, to show that cultural awareness is being raised (see also Chapter Eight) but, according to interviewees, few centres are involved in outreach work with local communities or, indeed, have any contact with local communities at all. Payment for access to sites raises questions about the equitable distribution of resources but, as yet, the policy community appears not to have addressed the issue other than take piecemeal measures. The House of Commons' Environment Committee (1995) recommends that action should be taken, wherever possible, to attract visitors to under-used robust sites which fit the Best Available Place criteria. These criteria include sites which are close to users' homes, derelict land sites, and land of the least agricultural and scenic value. Local sites may fit sustainability criteria and, as it has been argued in Chapter Six, could be used for educational field work. If a lack of transport is preventing young people from taking up outdoor courses, then it would also seem to make sense to have recreational sites closer to home. The downside, however, is that groups are effectively being denied the

opportunity to experience those environments which lend themselves, perhaps more than any other, to challenging outdoor adventurous pursuits and which provide opportunities for quiet recreation.

7.5 Concluding Remarks

It has been seen that planning and environmental policies play a major role in determining the overall level of outdoor provision, in that they influence the location, number and size of outdoor centres and, albeit to a limited degree, the type of activities undertaken. Although all of the National Park Authorities are bound by the same objectives under the Environment Act 1995, the interpretation of these objectives by individual Authorities, as a comparison of planning policies has shown, is a crucial factor in determining the pattern and nature of development.

The need for a precautionary approach to development means that planning policies have tended to focus on environmental protection, whilst the issue of equity remains largely unresolved. Payment for site access, for example, raises a number of questions about ability to pay. The study findings indicate that it may well be groups of young people who suffer the consequences of access policies. The evaluation of bunkhouse barn accommodation suggests that cost is an important factor in determining young people's uptake of outdoor opportunities.

Young people appear to be disadvantaged in other ways. Contemporary sources suggest, for example, that there is still a chronic under-representation of young people within the planning process. Certainly, there is little evidence from the study to show that young people's opinions, about the current range of provision, are being sought. Furthermore, young people taking part in organised activities from outdoor centres, are often the target of hostilities in recreational conflicts. There appears to be little justification. Indeed, most types of outdoor adventurous activities conform to National Park purposes relating to quiet enjoyment and to the principles of sustainable leisure. As the following chapter shows, the causes of such recreational conflicts are complex, but by strengthening the relationships between outdoor centres and local communities,

resistance to the development of outdoor facilities can be overcome and opportunities for young people's involvement in outdoor activities safeguarded.

CHAPTER EIGHT - LEISURE BEHAVIOUR AND OUTDOOR

ACTIVITIES : VISITOR-HOST RELATIONSHIPS, MODERN LIFESTYLES AND MOTIVATION

8.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on young people's leisure behaviour. Unlike previous chapters, however, which examine a specific theme and adopt a common structure, it brings together a number of somewhat disparate issues. All of these have been alluded to elsewhere in the thesis and all appear to play some role in affecting young people's access to outdoor opportunities.

The chapter begins by considering some of the impacts arising from outdoor activities and by outlining the reasons why, according to centre managers, conflicts between visiting groups and host communities occur. It examines ways in which conflicts have been resolved, in particular the measures adopted by centres to strengthen relationships with local residents and landowners. The chapter then turns to leisure lifestyles. It explores, through the experience of centre staff, young people's attitudes to outdoor activities and the extent to which outdoor courses are beginning to change. It refers to previous chapters, suggesting that a combination of factors is contributing to a new type of outdoor experience. Chapter Eight concludes by considering the extent to which young people are encouraged to take up outdoor activities. It focuses on a number of national organisations involved in creating access to outdoor opportunities, outlining some of the schemes which are in place and some of the issues which have yet to be resolved.

8.2 The Impact of Outdoor Activities

8.2.1 Centre Experience

The socio-cultural impacts of tourist-related activities are well documented (see, for example, Murphy 1985, Ryan 1991) and studies of outdoor activities show how hostilities between visitor and host communities can lead, ultimately, to measures which prevent the further development of outdoor facilities (Dartington Amenity Research Trust 1980, Hunt 1989). The findings from this research suggest that the development of outdoor centres is being limited, in part, by the desire of local planning authorities to prevent conflict at a local level (Chapter Seven).

The study did not set out to examine, in detail, the socio-cultural, environmental or economic impacts of outdoor activities. Indeed, many of those interviewed were unaware of problems caused by visitors using their centres, in part, because they themselves were not always involved in leading activities. However, some managers expressed concern about the damage caused by overuse of sites and were aware of conflicts between user groups, particularly in competition for climbing pitches. The behaviour of some groups had also led to conflicts with local residents and landowners. Residents had complained to centre managers, for example, about the rowdy behaviour of young people who were staying at nearby outdoor centres and using village facilities. One centre had recently been contacted by the parish clerk on behalf of the local Residents' Association about the unacceptable numbers of young people wanting help with questionnaires, as part of their field work. One community had signalled its reluctance, through local newspapers, to see the local outdoor activity centre used by young offenders. There were a number of reports of farmers complaining about groups damaging stone walls, leaving gates open, dropping litter, and disturbing stock. One group had been reprimanded by the centre manager for picking wild flowers and collecting stones from a geologically important site.

Centre managers put forward a number of reasons as to why conflicts between visiting groups and host communities can occur. These included,

1. The poor planning and management of sites

Some National Park Authorities were criticised, by centre managers, for increasing car parking provision near to popular activity sites and thereby exacerbating problems of congestion and overuse. The majority of centres believed that communication between centres, user groups and other interest groups could be improved, even though many admitted to operating in relative isolation. The questionnaire findings showed, for example, that approximately 20% of centres, across all sectors, never liaise with landowners, local communities or other users over the use of sites, and nearly 40% have no links with the Sports Governing Bodies. These centres are often not represented at a local level, for example on local conservation working parties, and do not belong to professional outdoor organisations. The reasons given for not joining such bodies ranged from the pressures on staff time, to the political nature of meetings, the perceived influence of particular sub-groups or individuals, and the parochial attitude adopted by committee members. Some centres are better represented than others. The majority of local education authority centre managers are members of the National Association for Outdoor Education. Some centres belong to regional organisations, such as the Derbyshire Association for Residential Education which aims to promote good practice and environmental commitment. Communication with National Park Authorities varies. Nearly 60% of all questionnaire respondents liaise with the Park Authorities only on an occasional basis and some centres have no contact at all. Some managers expressed concern about the general lack of collaboration between themselves and National Park planners involved in policy decision making, although many appear to have a good working relationship with National Park wardens and youth liaison officers, who often assist in centre activities.

2. Individual perception of different types of sport and recreation

One fifth of the centre managers interviewed were of the opinion that activities commonly undertaken by centre users are often singled out, by local interest groups, and accused of creating a nuisance. At the time of the survey, centres in Wales were aware of widespread local opposition to paragliding, although none were themselves involved in organising this activity. Previous years have seen campaigns mounted against mountain bikes and windsurfing. According to interviewees there appears, often, to be no legitimate reason for such opposition. The activities are not necessarily in conflict with National Park objectives for quiet recreation, nor is the issue always one of competition for the same physical resource or about damage to the environment, rather it is thought to be one of socio-cultural differences. One manager, for example, referred to the findings of the House of Commons' Environment Committee, namely that, 1) compared to other land uses, leisure and tourism do not cause significant ecological damage, and 2) cultural conflicts may be *'just as real and sometimes more important than the physical problems - indeed they are often the root cause of the various tensions and dissatisfactions that are redefined as threats to the environment'* (House of Commons' Environment Committee 1995, Para 33).

According to the House of Commons' Environment Committee, the danger lies in misinterpreting the disputes over culture - or the type of leisure people prefer - with a concern for the environment. Pritchard (1995), for example, points to the conflicts arising on Lake Windermere, where the issue may be less to do with ecological damage, but more a case of the older 'sailing' generation opposing the use of motorised vehicles, generally owned by younger people. Similarly, Elson (1995) argues that,

'Judgements on the significance of impacts will also depend on individuals' views on what is 'appropriate' in the countryside. Many of the newer leisure activities challenge a countryside image where the longstanding (but perhaps never really obtained!) metaphors are tradition, stability and tranquillity' (p. 3)

The countryside is, according to Clark (1994), a field of struggle amongst new social groupings, especially those concerned with conservation, sport and hobby, and it is the perception of the countryside, by these groups, which is often at the heart of conflicts about its use. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, to encounter differences of opinion, even amongst centre managers, about the nature of outdoor activities, such as the extensive on-site use at some centres of rope courses, assault courses and climbing frames, and their appropriateness in the National Parks (see, also, 8.3.2 - Evidence of a Change in the Nature of Activities).

3. A lack of distinction between different types of group

Centre managers further suggested that the hostility towards centre users can arise because of a failure, by others, to make a mental distinction, consciously or otherwise, between groups taking part in organised outdoor activities from outdoor centres and those involved in large scale events such as fell running races. The potential impact of such large gatherings is widely acknowledged (Lake District National Park Authority 1996, British Orienteering Federation 1995b). It was suggested that, in some areas, all forms of group activity appear unwelcome, even though problems can equally be caused by too many individual users. Certainly the Snowdonia National Park Authority, in its Management Plan, gives the impression that groups are generally to blame: '*Problems of misbehaviour, trespass, too large a party, depositing litter, blocking culverts, rolling stones, climbing over fences and leaving gates open, all arise from groups in the Parks* (Snowdonia National Park Authority 1986, p.43).

4. A lack of distinction between different types of centre

Both centre managers and National Park Authorities acknowledge that fewer problems arise from irresponsible visitor behaviour, when outdoor centres are wardened, especially by staff who know the area, than if centres are unmanned or if group visits are made on a casual basis. It is impossible, however, for Park Authorities to discriminate, in planning terms, between different types of centre:

'Whilst well organised and managed group participation in outdoor activities undoubtedly promotes an understanding of Eryri and the sensitivity of the environment, many activities are still organised and led by unqualified staff and do not incorporate an environmental education component as part of their training or activity programme...Unfortunately at present the local planning authority cannot discriminate between these different types of centre'

(Snowdonia National Park Authority 1995, p.209)

Interviewees also pointed out that it is impossible to distinguish between groups from different centres out in the field and thus the irresponsible behaviour of a few individuals or small number of groups, can lead to the general disapproval of centre activities, irrespective of their track record. Development plan policies, as it has been seen, favour the development of centres within settlements because of the overriding environmental principles such as the visual impact of development outwith settlement boundaries. The result is that activity centres are sometimes located close to existing residential properties. A few managers argued that such policies fail to take account of the adverse impact of centre development on local communities and increase the likelihood of conflicts between resident groups and centre users.

5. The attitude and behaviour of independent group leaders

Comments made during the centre interviews suggest that:

- the leaders of visiting groups can, themselves, be unfamiliar with the countryside and are unable, therefore, to advise groups on appropriate codes of behaviour. Those lacking in experience of the outdoors also find it difficult, according to centre

managers, to translate their academic knowledge, for example about environmental issues, into meaningful practical exercises.

- leaders are often keen to seek advice or information on activity sites but for those unfamiliar with the area or with countryside organisations in general, there is an overload of information and confusion, amongst visitors, as to what is on offer. Many visitors, it was pointed out, are unaware of the difference between the National Trust and National Parks.

- leaders sometimes lack control over groups in their charge A common complaint amongst day centre operators was that many courses are booked on the last minute and groups met on site, which means that there is little opportunity to lay down ground rules on participant behaviour. One group has been banned from a residential centre for disrupting other guests. One centre includes, in its safety contract, the clause: '*Group leaders will be responsible for the good behaviour of the group at the centre and in the surrounding neighbourhood*'. One hostel manager 'warns off' other visitors if groups are using the centre because of the anticipated noise and disruption. Another centre tries not to mix different age groups, especially in the 13-19 age band, when organising programmes.

6. Centre approach to raising environmental and cultural awareness

The potential for conflict was thought, by some interviewees, to be greater when centres themselves fail to adopt measures to raise environmental and cultural awareness. Some centre managers admitted that they are reluctant to engage in any discussion with visiting groups about the potential impact of outdoor activities. As one operator commented, '*I do not want to be seen to be lecturing to people who are just here to have fun*' and, in the words of another, '*it is not my duty to tell people how to behave*'. Some centres were criticised by others for indulging in 'urban' activities - rope courses were cited - which are not reliant on the natural resources of

the National Parks, and for catering to demand rather than setting an appropriate agenda.

Given that visiting groups, as it has been pointed out, may be unfamiliar with the area and may seek advice on activity sites, centres can influence group behaviour through the information they provide. It is widely acknowledged that codes of conduct, for example, such as those produced by the Sports Governing Bodies, can be used to promote good practice. Indeed, the Government has endorsed the House of Commons' Environment Committee view that,

'Codes of Practice are useful tools. We therefore believe that it is important to get them disseminated to a much wider audience, providing them to those who are not members of a sporting organisation, via guidebooks, leaflets and manuals...those who instruct learners or lead parties - all of these can, and should, play a part in familiarising their customers with codes of practice'

(Department of Environment 1995, p. xvi)

The questionnaire returns showed that two thirds of centres provide information on activity sites, cycling and walking routes and that over 20% of responding centres in the voluntary sector use sites because they are advised to do so. Interviewees expressed concern, however, that some centres, especially those without resident staff, may be unaware of current site management issues and may be giving ill-informed advice. It should be added that when centres were visited in order to interview centre managers, a request was made to see the type of visitor information provided. The range of leaflets and guides available at all centres was immense, especially those produced by the Tourist Boards on nearby visitor attractions. Information from the Sports Governing Bodies, including their voluntary codes of practice was, however, hard to find.

There were few examples of centres working with local communities, for example encouraging local schools to use centre facilities, because most centres, as it was pointed out, were fully booked or too busy running their own courses.

8.2.2 Building Relationships

The National Park Authorities have a duty, under the Environment Act 1995, '*to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities*' (Her Majesty's Government 1995, Section 5(1)), and Chapter Seven, through its examination of planning policies, has shown how the development of centres is closely linked to community considerations. Centre aims and objectives vary (Figure 8.1). Some centres offer outdoor adventurous activities as a relaxing, enjoyable and fun experience. Others use them as a part of rehabilitation programmes and to provide young people, especially from inner cities, with the opportunity to discover the countryside. Many outdoor workers believe that outdoor adventurous activities can provide young people with a sense of responsibility for their own well being and for that of others, and can be used as a vehicle to enhance environmental and cultural awareness.

The interviews with centre managers revealed that a number of measures, many of which involved young people, had been introduced in an attempt to improve relationships with local communities and to promote a better image of the outdoor sector in general. These included,

Figure 8.1 Examples of Centre Aims and Objectives

To provide residential experience for our students, many of whom are drawn from deprived backgrounds.

To promote those values that are desirable in any society, e.g. self confidence, self reliance, understanding of others, integrity, humility.

To promote the personal and social development of our students and to enhance a sense of citizenship

To assist in the process of growth, both physical and mental. To introduce new skills and activities which may provide a source of lasting enjoyment...to give to every one of our users a feeling of success...

To assist our schools and youth centres in providing for the needs of the new National Curriculum e.g. personal and social education, cross curricula work, profiling.

(Extract from the Storey Arms Outdoor Education Centre Mission Statement 1996)

To promote an Outdoor Pursuits Centre for the prevention of crime and family breakdown in England and Wales.

To relieve social deprivation by providing a holiday centre for people in danger of social breakdown in South Yorkshire.

(Extract from the South Yorkshire Outdoor Pursuits Trust Constitution and Rules 1990)

To create a balance between the excitement, fun and achievement of adventure with the reassurance of a framework of safety, top quality equipment, caring and professional instruction.

(Extract from the Newlands Adventure Centre Brochure 1996)

1. Employing local people in administrative, domestic and, occasionally, instructor posts.
2. Inviting local residents to give talks and using opportunities, in the field, to inform visiting groups, especially young people, about local history and traditions.
3. Organising conservation work for groups of young people as part of outdoor programmes, to foster relationships with local landowners and, in the words of one centre manager, '*to promote the notion of giving something back to the environment*'.
4. Reviewing and evaluating courses, in part to encourage participants to reflect on their performance and on the impact of their activities.
5. Ensuring that groups are accompanied during the evenings i.e. when problems have been known to occur because of relaxed supervision.
6. Encouraging, in centres in Wales, the use of the Welsh language on outdoor courses. Some of these centres already attract large numbers of youth and school groups from within Wales. For non-Welsh speakers, it provides an opportunity to introduce visitors to the language and culture.
7. Providing opportunities for local people to use centres. Although the study found few examples of local outreach work, there were some exceptions. One centre, for example, invites local schools, choirs, youth groups, young farmers and others to take part in day and evening programmes during its off-peak season, and provides lunches for local senior citizen and church groups. According to the centre owner, the efforts made to build up good community relationships have proved invaluable and have recently led to a campaign to keep the centre open.

8. Offering environmental education programmes, typically as part of the school curricula, although interviews revealed that the manner in which such programmes are delivered is often dictated by the interests of the staff involved and by the existing level of knowledge of visiting groups. There is a strong belief, amongst many centre managers, that teaching methods do not have to be formal to be effective.

It should, perhaps, be borne in mind that the 'local community' is far from a homogenous group. As a couple of interviewees pointed out, the benefits and disadvantages of a nearby centre, may affect only a small number of people. Some residents may be completely unaffected - a large number of centres are, after all, situated in remote locations away from village settlements. Neither should the diversity of the above measures, which are largely aimed at improving relationships and promoting a better image, disguise the fact that, in reality, such measures are all too rarely implemented. The approach adopted at centres in Wales, for example, varies from that illustrated above, in which raising cultural awareness is an integral part of the outdoor programme, to one in which the geographical location and cultural associations are seen, by centre managers, as irrelevant. The interviews suggested that many of the centre owners in Wales, especially those operating day centres, are English and attract a predominantly English clientele. Of the above examples, the most commonly cited was that of providing local employment. Significantly, all of the staffed centres interviewed, employed local people on a full or part time basis in domestic and administrative posts. Also significant is the fact that all of the above measures are only being undertaken at staffed centres.

8.2.3 Summary

In summary, therefore, although the complexity of recreational conflicts cannot be overstated, the findings suggest that it is possible to identify, at the broadest level, some of the underlying causes of conflict between outdoor activity centre users and other interest groups. These range from the individual perception of different sports and their participants, to the degree of influence of group leaders and centres over participant behaviour, and the effective planning and management of activity sites. Furthermore, it has been seen how a range of measures have been implemented by centres to strengthen relationships, especially with local communities. The importance of building good relationships with local people appears to be an essential factor in the long term security of outdoor centres, especially in the planning context, and, ultimately, in safeguarding outdoor opportunities for young people and others .

8.3 Modern Lifestyles

8.3.1 A TV and Video Nation

Recent years have witnessed something of a revolution in young people's lifestyles. More young people are spending time watching television and videos and playing computer games than ever before. Television viewing, in 16-24 year olds, averages approximately 18 hours a week and a survey conducted by MORI in 1996 showed that 8 out of 10 young people aged 15-19 have a television in their bedroom (Office for National Statistics 1998, p. 218). There has been a dramatic decline in the amount of physical exercise undertaken by young people. Whereas 80% of all 8 year olds went to school by bicycle or on foot in 1970, only 9% did so in 1990 (Hillman 1993 cited in Tuxworth 1996). An increasing lack of exercise means that the level of obesity in young people is rising even though dietary habits have improved and the level of fat intake, in recent years, has been reduced. It has been suggested that *'many children never experience the intensity and duration of*

physical activity associated with health-related outcomes' (Armstrong 1994, cited in Tuxworth 1996). Similar observations have been made in the Allied Dunbar National Fitness Survey i.e. that the majority of young people aged 16-24 years fall below their age appropriate activity level necessary to achieve a health benefit (Allied Dunbar 1992).

There have been other changes. Clark (1994), for example, suggests that the public has grown so accustomed, through the medium of television and video, to seeing time and space compressed through a collage of images and, through the medium of telephones, faxes and telexes, to receiving instantaneous responses, that clock time is losing its significance in modern society. There is an increasing demand for activities which provide instant gratification and an increasing tendency to dispose of everything, from leisure products to lifestyles, in the constant search for novel experiences. Young people appear to be particularly affected. As one study of leisure behaviour has concluded, the countryside, to many young people, is seen as boring and lacking relevance to their way of life,

'Part of the problem with the attitude of younger people is that the countryside is not perceived to entertain and provide immediate and tangible gratification. Many of the leisure activities currently undertaken by young people provide instantaneous rewards and we believe that this is shaping the needs of younger people'

(Qualitative Research Consultancy 1986, p.7).

The growing demand for new, exciting, less traditional forms of outdoor activity was observed in a study of over 1000 young people undertaken by the Youth Hostels' Association (Logan 1990). Asked which activities young people would like to undertake on a short break holiday, the most popular responses were water-skiing, parachuting, scuba diving and snow skiing. Activities such as orienteering, walking and caving aroused far less interest. Less than one percent of the young people sampled belonged to rambling, cycling or mountaineering organisations. As Logan observed, it would seem that *'the traditional appeal of just 'being in', perhaps*

'breathing in', the countryside with a pair of walking boots or a bicycle has diminished' (p.16).

8.3.2 Evidence of a Change in the Nature of Activities

So, what evidence can this study produce to show that changes are taking place in the nature of outdoor activity programmes? A comparison of the study findings with those from earlier research, notably Groups in the Countryside, shows that the popularity of some outdoor pursuits undertaken from outdoor centres remains unchanged (Dartington Amenity Research Trust 1980). The Dartington Amenity Research Trust found, for example, that walking and climbing were undertaken from over one half of the centres it surveyed and that over one third of centres provided a base for caving, canoeing and riding. Expeditions were a significant component of outdoor activities. Similarly, this research has found that activities such as walking, canoeing, cycling and riding are commonplace (see also Chapter Seven), and that large numbers of young people take part in expeditions, especially those organised as part of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. The majority of activities, as it has also been seen, make use of the National Parks' natural resources, often in relatively remote places. To a number of centre operators, the importance of getting young people to spend time away from the trappings of consumerism and take time for quiet reflection, is of paramount importance in adventure programmes. Some centres organise short expeditions and overnight camps as a part of activity programmes, in order to fulfil these objectives.

Despite the continuing popularity of the more traditional type of outdoor programme, the study findings suggest that, at some centres at least, changes are beginning to take place.

1. According to questionnaire and interview responses, more centres are now offering taster courses or multi-activity courses, in which participants can expect no more than 2-3 hours instruction in any one type of activity. Over the length of

a 5 day course, therefore, it is not unusual for participants to undertake 8-10 different outdoor pursuits.

2. Some centres are offering activities which have not previously been available at outdoor centres, such as roller blading and rock hopping. The former, according to one manager, is offered because it is popular with young people and requires minimum organisation and supervision. Rock hopping has been introduced at some centres because it is less time consuming than rock climbing and demands less skill.
3. One centre has dropped hill walking from its programmes for young people because, it is argued, it is becoming increasingly unpopular when there are other, more exciting, alternatives on offer. A couple of other centres were considering whether to offer alternative activities.
4. Some centres are providing more indoor activities. One centre, which caters almost exclusively for groups of young people, has recently opened an indoor sports complex, including a swimming pool and 10-pin bowling alley. According to the owner, the centre had been developed, in part, to meet changing leisure demands and because *'most young people, when they come here, do not want to be out in bad weather and want somewhere to 'hang out' in the evenings. If you do not change with the times, they will not come back. We are one of the only centres to provide these facilities and it is already proving to be a big success'*.
5. Centres are combining outdoor pursuits with other types of activity. The mix of outdoor pursuits and field work has already been mentioned. One centre in the Lake District makes use of Grizedale Forest for walking, cycling and orienteering activities, so that young people can, at the same time, explore the sculpture park. Another centre in the Lakes alternates days spent on outdoor pursuits with trips to nearby coastal resorts.

6. Some centres are trying to change their image in order to make them more appealing to young people and other users. The Youth Hostels' Association, for example, is trying to shed its image of dormitories, curfews and chores through advertising campaigns and new styles of hospitality. As one YHA warden pointed out, however, this can have its disadvantages: *'we are now in the business of customer care, hotel-style, which many of our members hate'*.

Some of the above changes raise issues relating to the purposes of the National Parks. For the Park Authorities to give permission for indoor facilities at outdoor centres, for example, seems to contradict the Parks' purpose *'to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities (of the Parks) by the public'* (Her Majesty's Government 1995), especially when outdoor adventure has been shown to help foster an appreciation of the environment. Concerns, within this context, about the use of climbing frames as opposed to natural rock faces has already been discussed (see Chapter Seven).

According to some centre managers, changes are necessary in order to entice young people onto outdoor courses and to encourage repeat visits. They are also viewed as an inevitable consequence of the changes taking place in contemporary society. There is a widespread belief amongst centre managers that young people are the product of an educational system which accords more importance to examination performance than to skills development and that many young people have difficulty in coping with the outdoor challenge. The manager of one centre, which has reduced the average length of course from 7 to 4 days, expressed the view that *'young people cannot take a full week of adventure because of the way they live at home. They are too used to their creature comforts. They have a lower threshold for outdoor activities'*. Another remarked, *'We are living in a push button world now. Society has gone a bit soft. Most young people could not survive a week of outdoor adventure. They just do not have the stamina - physical or mental. They have been spoon-fed for too long'* Parents and teachers, as Chapter Five discussed, were blamed for not giving young people the opportunity to use their initiative or to test

their own ability and limits. One centre has even felt it necessary to add, in its parental consent form, the statement '*At times, it is possible that a student may become cold, wet and tired as our activities are designed to be adventurous and challenging*' (Appendix 5).

8.3.3 Summary

This section has shown how a number of changes are taking place in the nature of outdoor activities. Not only are new activities being offered by outdoor centres and the role of some traditional pursuits being questioned, but also the range of activities is increasing and wet weather alternatives are being offered. The reasons for these changes are attributed, in part, to young people's lifestyles which, it is argued, have become increasingly sedentary and home-based on the one hand, and increasingly accustomed to sound bite entertainment on the other. In some cases, it is young people themselves who are choosing not to take part in particular forms of outdoor sports and recreation. It would appear, however, that the changes are being accelerated by factors other than changes in lifestyle. It has already been seen, for example, that safety reforms and increasing concerns over the risk of accident and injury, have resulted in a shift from activities perceived as high risk to those which can, in principle, be more easily controlled (Chapter Five). At the same time, schools have been forced, through local management, to make choices about spending on curricula-related activities and, in some cases, have opted to reduce the time spent on outdoor activities because of the cost involved (Chapter Seven). The increasing demand for hourly and part time sessions and the growth of day centres within the private sector has also been noted (Chapter Four). The cumulative effect is that courses are becoming more inflexible, the spontaneity and surprise element of adventurous activities gradually stifled and, as the discussion on safety reform has already indicated, the very concept of outdoor adventure increasingly threatened.

8.4 The Role of Advisory Bodies in Increasing Young People's Motivation

As it was outlined in Chapter One, studies of young people suggest that motivation plays a crucial part in determining the level of participation in sporting and recreational activities (Hendry 1993, Hunt 1989). Hunt, himself, implied that involvement was as much to do with receiving opportunities as with taking them (p.197) although it is often difficult to make the distinction. At the outset of the research programme a number of informal discussions were held with organisations involved in facilitating outdoor opportunities. Although these meetings were intended, primarily, to explore the topic of research in its widest context and it was made clear by most interviewees that the views expressed were a mix of organisational policy and personal opinion, a number of issues arose which are pertinent to this discussion. Of particular importance is the fact that, despite promises made by organisations to improve young people's access to outdoor activities, the measures taken to date have been limited, and opportunities to stimulate young people's interest in outdoor activities in the countryside have not always been realised. The following sections outline some of the problems.

8.4.1 The English Sports Council

The promotion of countryside activities in young people was one of the issues to arise from A Countryside for Sport (Sports Council 1992). However, since the publication of this and other policy documents which refer to the importance of opportunities for young people, the Sports Council has undergone a radical restructuring programme. The changes have resulted in a new organisational structure and a revised policy framework. The functions of the newly established English Sports Council are threefold, namely to develop sport in young people, to develop excellence in sport, and to ensure the delivery of sporting opportunities through the operation of the Lottery Distribution Fund. It would appear, from the discussions with the English Sports Council's representative, that restructuring has a

number of implications which impact on young people's opportunities to take part in outdoor adventurous activities in the countryside. Thus,

1. The newly defined role of the English Sports Council, together with a withdrawal of funding for mass participation in sport, marks a significant shift from the Sports Council's policy of 'sport for all'. This policy underpinned the Council's strategies in Young People and Sport. Policy and Frameworks for Action and A Countryside for Sport (Sports Council 1992, 1993). Current policies and resources are now more focused on a number of prioritised areas within the English Sports Council's remit of sports development.
2. There has been a shift of emphasis from countryside and water activities to sports development work which happens to use these resources.
3. Countryside and water sports are now treated in the same manner as all other sports for lottery grants. As funding, until very recently, has only be used to support capital grants, its application to informal activities, including the sorts of programme organised through outdoor centres, has been limited.
4. The National Governing Bodies are being encouraged to take responsibility for the development of codes of conduct and the production of management plans based on examples of good practice. They are now also responsible for site-specific projects at a club level. Importantly, the Sports Council has stated that '*the onus will be on the National Governing Bodies to ensure that they are aware of the availability of outdoor opportunities and conversant with their rights and responsibilities*' (Sports Council 1996). This delegation of responsibility, as it will be seen below, raises further issues.

8.4.2 Sports Governing Bodies

Measures undertaken by the Sports Governing Bodies to facilitate young people's participation in outdoor activities and to harness their enthusiasm vary, as discussions with representatives from the British Mountaineering Council (BMC), the British Cycling Federation (BCF), British Orienteering Federation (BOF) and Ramblers' Association (RA) show.

The British Mountaineering Council

Mountaineering is one of Britain's fastest growing sports. Individual membership of the BMC doubled between 1980 and 1990 and there are approximately 250 mountaineering clubs nation-wide (Centre for Leisure Research 1991, p.111). There is no detailed information on youth membership, but the BMC is aware that opportunities for young people to participate in recreational climbing are often limited because of a lack of locally available leaders and a lack of transport to reach suitable climbing sites. A large number of clubs do not accept young people under 18. Because of the constraints, young people are often referred to indoor climbing walls, although, as the BMC acknowledge, these can be a poor substitute for outdoor climbing. In order to overcome some of the difficulties, a number of initiatives have been undertaken. The Council offers junior membership rates, for example, and information packs designed specifically for young people. It organises youth festivals, youth meets, taster days and exhibitions in order to advertise its work, provide training contacts, and encourage young climbers to share their experiences. It runs skills training courses for young people to assist in the transition from indoor to outdoor climbing. It also encourages climbing clubs to consider youth membership and arranges access and environmental awareness seminars for university and college climbing groups.

The British Cycling Federation

The measures taken by the British Mountaineering Council to encourage young people into recreational climbing, contrast sharply with the British Cycling

Federation's efforts to open up non-competitive cycling opportunities. Cycling is the sixth most popular form of physical exercise, involving approximately 10% of the population at any one time (Centre for Leisure Research 1991, p.54). New technologies have, in recent years, given rise to new forms of cycling, including mountain biking which, in turn, has allowed cyclists greater access to the countryside. The National Parks, with their network of unsurfaced tracks and bridleways, have seen a significant increase in mountain bike activity which is reflected through specific planning policies (see, for example, Lake District National Park Authority 1997). Despite the opportunities that mountain biking offers young people and others to explore the countryside, the BCF's work with young people focuses almost exclusively on competitive cycling, often on indoor circuits. There are no policies to increase access to the countryside even though the Federation is aware, through local clubs and cycle retailers, that young people living in urban areas often express an interest in visiting countryside sites but do not know where to go or how to get there.

The British Orienteering Federation

The British Orienteering Federation, which has experienced an overall decline in membership in recent years, acknowledges that there are problems in encouraging and enabling young people to participate in orienteering activities. Despite the Federation's aim to ensure that orienteering can be enjoyed by people of all ages, a recent nation-wide survey of orienteering clubs found that clubs are often unable to organise orienteering events for young people because of 1) the logistics of collecting young people living over very wide geographical areas, 2) the transport costs involved, and 3) the unwillingness of adults to accompany groups (British Orienteering Federation 1995a). When asked what single development would meet club needs in promoting junior participation the responses included,

- the appointment of professional junior development personnel,
- properly resourced help to bridge the gap between schools and clubs,

- national effort through the National Curriculum,
- local education authority endorsement of orienteering in schools,
- regionally co-ordinated participation programmes,
- promotion aimed at families and schools,
- national publicity linked to local activities,
- club recognition of the importance of juniors,
- better public transport.

The Ramblers' Association

The Ramblers' Association recognises that, as far as young people are concerned, it has failed to address the problems of low membership. The Association, which aims to encourage countryside recreation, conserve the countryside, and safeguard legal access, has approximately 110,000 members. The majority of members are over 45.

The main factors which are thought to deter young people from joining the Ramblers' Association include,

- a lack of awareness of the Association and its aims,
- difficulty in finding information about walks and organised activities,
- information which young people find dull and unattractive,
- a reluctance to join because of the overall image of the Association: In the words of its representative *'we are still regarded by many people as the grey-haired and red bobble hat brigade'*,
- a lack of young groups and young leaders,
- a lack of transport,
- a wide range of alternative and more appealing leisure activities.

The Association admits that because its membership has risen steadily over the past decade, and in view of the age of its members, its publicity continues to be aimed at the older age group i.e. from which there is likely to be the highest return (Ramblers' Association - personal communication 08.07.96). Limited attempts to widen

membership have included the 'Let's Get Going' campaign, launched in 1991, which aimed to help people of limited means, especially young people, to enjoy walking in the countryside. RA leaders, through a network of community link officers, have also assisted with residential visits for schools and youth groups. There is growing concern, however, that the move towards tighter safety regulations and child protection policies is deterring would-be volunteers because of the liability issues such measures raise (see, also, Chapter Five). The Sports Council's decision to shift its policy emphasis away from 'sport for all' and from countryside and water recreation to sports development has resulted in reduced funding for RA schemes which target disadvantaged groups. This loss of funding, together with the shortage of volunteers and a lack of commitment to the youth sector means that there are no immediate plans, within the organisation, to boost junior membership or encourage young people's participation in organised walking activities in the countryside.

8.4.3 Countryside Commission

The Countryside Commission's concern about young people's awareness of outdoor opportunities was one of the guiding principles of Young People's Access to Outdoor Learning Experiences commissioned,

'to assist the Countryside Commission in the development of its policy toward young people, in particular to consider the opportunities which outdoor learning creates for increasing their awareness of, understanding and confidence in visiting the countryside'

(Countryside Commission 1994, p. 7)

The study made a number of recommendations including,

- the need for continued support through policy documents, for the importance of access for all, including disadvantaged groups,

- a review of promotional material in terms of its appropriateness for intended audiences,
- support for staff training, in relation to skills and confidence in working with young people.

According to the Countryside Commission's representative, the adoption of these recommendations has been limited. Current resources, it is argued, are being focused largely on conservation projects, whilst developing and improving facilities for recreation are assuming a lower priority, and provision for young people, apart from a few relatively small scale projects, is not being addressed. It was also pointed out that A Living Landscape. Our Strategy for the Next Ten Years, which sets out the Countryside Commission's policy objectives for 1996-2006, announces its intention to cease work on environmental education (Countryside Commission 1996). It is understood that the Commission's revised recreation strategy, due to be published in 1999, will not take adequate account of the needs of younger age groups. It is believed that the lack of information on the behaviour, motives and attitudes of young people results in policies being misdirected. It is also thought that there is a reluctance, on the part of the Commission, to acknowledge the changes taking place within youth cultures, and an inability to view young people as potential customers to the countryside.

8.4.4 The Forestry Authority

The Forestry Authority has a policy to *'help all people, and especially the young, to further their awareness, understanding and enjoyment of the forest'* (Forestry Authority 1992). At one of the largest Forest Parks, Grizedale in Cumbria, a recent survey showed that the 2,500 hectare site received approximately 350,000 visitors a year and provided for a wide range of recreational activities (Forest Enterprise 1993). Although the Authority acknowledges that the use of Grizedale by groups based at outdoor centres in the Lake District could significantly reduce the pressures on other, more vulnerable, sites nearby, the number of visitors on organised trips is

relatively low and only 10% of visitors are aged 15-24 (i.b.i.d., p.4). The Authority has no formal links with local outdoor centres. It acknowledges that attempts to encourage centre visits have been limited and that, in its consumer surveys, the views of young people are not normally sought. Grizedale is not accessible by public transport and, therefore, although only a few miles from a number of hostels is, for some user groups, thought to be out of bounds.

8.4.5 Summary

In summary, there is a suggestion that although organisations support, in principle, measures to improve young people's access to outdoor opportunities, in practice, these have been limited. There is, for example, a recognition that, as Hunt (1989) and others have shown, the availability of information, transport and activity leaders can be crucial in opening up access, especially for young people. It has been acknowledged, however, particularly by the Sports Governing Bodies, that improvements in these areas are still required. This is especially important given that, as the postal questionnaire findings showed, one fifth of responding centres believed that a lack of information was one of the main factors preventing young people from taking up outdoor activities, and over 10% of centres indicated that a lack of transport was also a contributing factor. There is, further, a growing realisation that the needs of young people, as a consumer group within the leisure market, must be addressed and that, in order to do so, more information on their leisure motives and behaviour is required. The discussions suggest that the difficulties faced by organisations in trying to meet these objectives range from a lack of resources to a genuine lack of commitment in the face of conflicting priorities. As the interviews with centre managers revealed, it is often the commitment - of parents, teachers, centre staff and others - to outdoor adventurous activities which enables centres to keep running, even when resources are stretched to the limit. Despite the wealth of alternative leisure pursuits open to young people the signs are, from these discussions at least, that many young people would be eager to take up opportunities if they were available. As Roberts (1983) has pointed out,

with reference to young people's leisure activities, '*we are not saying we know the answers or can offer one kind of provision which will make it right but there are mechanisms to make it easier if this is the choice*' (p. 180).

8.5 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has attempted to draw together some of the issues remaining from the empirical research. It has also brought the main discussion of the survey material to a close. Evidence from the survey has shown how a number of diverse factors, from centre ownership to safety reform, educational reform, environmental and planning policies and leisure behaviour, appear to influence young people's opportunities to participate in outdoor activities. The final chapter provides an overview of these findings, attempting to assess their relative importance and to place the research project in the wider leisure context. In the process, it considers whether the study objectives have been met and what future work may be required to throw further light on some of the emerging trends.

CHAPTER NINE - EVALUATION OF METHODS, OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE WAY AHEAD

9.1 Introduction

It is intended, in this final chapter, to undertake a critical evaluation of some aspects of the research methodology, to provide an overview of the study findings, and to make recommendations to improve young people's opportunities to participate in outdoor activities. The chapter begins by re-visiting the study aims and assessing, in the light of the research findings, the extent to which these aims have been met. It also questions whether the study methodology could be used outside of the National Parks, and whether the study findings are specific to the National Parks. The chapter then draws together the main findings from the study and considers the dynamic and complex nature of the factors affecting young people's participation in outdoor activities. Finally, the discussion focuses on some of the problems facing the outdoor sector at the present time and examines ways in which outdoor opportunities might be safeguarded. In particular, it makes recommendations for a new organisation and for better links between the outdoor community and Sports Governing Bodies, local planning authorities, and educational establishments.

9.2 Study Evaluation

9.2.1 A Review of the Study Aims

The research set out to answer the question '*What are the factors affecting young people's participation in outdoor activities?*'. More specifically, it aimed 1) to examine the nature of outdoor facilities, 2) to determine their use by young people, 3) to identify the changes occurring within the outdoor sector, and 4) to consider the implications for young people's participation in outdoor activities. These aims were

addressed in a number of hypotheses, namely,

1. Outdoor provision can be described in terms of its structure and operation.
2. The numbers and profile of young people using outdoor facilities can be determined.
3. Factors leading to changes in the outdoor sector can be identified and linked to young people's participation in outdoor activities.

The empirical work focused on organised activities undertaken from outdoor centres in National Parks. A postal questionnaire survey of centres enabled detailed information to be collected on a number of discrete characteristics of centre provision, such as centre age and size, ownership and management, facilities and staffing, types of activity and sites used.

The questionnaire survey generated an overall response rate of 68%, with responses from individual Parks ranging from 53% (North York Moors) to 83% (Peak Park). This compares favourably with other studies of outdoor provision, including Taverner (1994), the Dartington Amenity Research Trust (1980), Hunt (1989), and Centre for Leisure Research (1995), in which questionnaire response rates were 67%, 50%, 36%, and 35% respectively.

A number of techniques were used in this study to encourage returns (see Chapter Two). Questionnaires were, for example, directed at a named centre operator, stamped addressed envelopes were enclosed with the questionnaire, some of the non-respondents were contacted by telephone, and questionnaires were circulated during the activity centres' off-peak season. A higher response rate might have been obtained from centres in Wales if questionnaires had been in Welsh, but time and cost constraints did not allow for this. Neither was it considered feasible to survey all of the Parks i.e. to include also the Yorkshire Dales, Northumberland, Exmoor, the Pembrokeshire Coast and the Broads. Although some of these Parks have

relatively small numbers of outdoor centres, their inclusion in the study would have increased the sample size.

It is possible, given the design and content of the questionnaire, that those centres which catered for young people would have been more likely to respond than those which did not. In retrospect, therefore, a different cover page and fewer age-specific questions might have helped to increase the response rate. It is difficult to assess the implications of a non-response. It is, however, considered unlikely that the patterns seen in the structure and operation of centres would have differed given a) the findings from other studies of outdoor provision, and b) the relatively large number of residential centres (188 in total) analysed in this study. It is possible, however, that a higher response rate might have resulted in a lower percentage of young people taking up outdoor courses.

In the light of the study findings, then, it is possible to affirm Hypothesis 1, namely that *'outdoor provision can be described in terms of its structure and operation'* and to affirm, with caution, Hypothesis 2, namely that *'the number and profile of young people using specific types of outdoor provision can be determined'*.

Questionnaire responses and centre interviews identified a number of changes taking place within the outdoor sector (Figure 9.1). The pattern of centre ownership, for example, which reflects both historical factors and changing leisure demands, is currently showing an increase in private and non-residential provision. There is also a growing emphasis on diversification and specialisation of centre activities. Safety reforms have been introduced in response to demands for safe and quality provision and improved accountability. These have led to a review of centre policy and practice, to changes in the nature of activities, and to shifts in visitor groups.

Figure 9.1 Summary of the factors affecting young people's opportunities to participate in outdoor activities

<u>Cause</u>	<u>Manifestation</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
<i>Pattern of ownership</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical development of outdoor centres • Changes in leisure demands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Differences in centre operations * Increased private and non-residential provision * Increased diversity and specialisation 	<p>Reduced opportunities</p> <p>Reduced 'residential element'</p>

<i>Safety reform</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on accountability and quality assurance • Demands for safe / quality provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Review of policy and practice * Changes in nature of activities * Shifts in visitor groups 	<p>Reduced opportunities</p> <p>Reduced 'adventure element'</p>

<i>Educational reform</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standardisation of teaching methods • Improvement in teaching standards • Greater autonomy of schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Increased curricula-related activities * Increased centre diversification 	<p>Reduced opportunities</p> <p>Reduced 'residential element'</p>

<i>Environmental and planning policy</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocation of resources • Incorporation of sustainability principles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Development control * Payment for access * Lack of participation in decision-making 	<p>Reduced opportunities</p>

<i>Leisure behaviour</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socio-cultural changes • Influence of advisory bodies • Attitude of host communities • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Alternative activities * Availability of information / transport / leaders * Local hostility * 	<p>Reduced opportunities</p> <p>Reduced take up of opportunities</p> <p>Reduced 'adventure element'</p>

Educational reforms, aimed at standardising teaching methods, improving teaching standards, and giving schools greater autonomy, have given rise to an increase in field studies and a reduction in outdoor pursuits, and have led, indirectly, to increasing diversification of centre activities. Environmental and planning policies have resulted in the control of centre development and access to natural resources. Socio-cultural changes have given rise to alternative leisure activities, and leisure behaviour, including the level of environmental awareness, has influenced the relationship between host communities and visiting groups. Evidence from the empirical research suggests that all of these changes are having a detrimental effect on young people's opportunities to participate in outdoor activities.

In the light of the study findings it is possible, therefore, to affirm Hypothesis 3, namely that *'factors leading to changes in the outdoor sector can be identified and linked to young people's participation in outdoor activities'*.

In affirming these hypotheses, however, it is important to remember that the study provides but a snapshot in time. The conditions which govern outdoor provision and access to outdoor opportunities, as it will be seen later in this chapter, are constantly changing, and the future development of the outdoor sector is far from certain.

9.2.2 National Parks as a Focus for Research

National Parks were chosen as a focus for the research because of their range of natural resources, opportunities for outdoor adventurous activities, and high concentration of outdoor activity centres. As Groups in the Countryside showed, however, activity centres are found throughout England and Wales, the National Parks and immediate surroundings accounting for about 50% of outdoor provision nationwide (Dartington Amenity Research Trust 1980, p.271). The question arises, therefore, as to whether, in the light of the study findings, a similar methodological

approach could be applied to different geographical areas, and whether the factors identified in this study are specific to conditions within the National Parks.

The empirical research comprised a combination of exploratory discussions, review of planning policies, postal questionnaire and centre interviews. These methods were chosen, in part, because they were felt to be comprehensive, complementary, reliable and, importantly, could be reproduced. Questions were not specific to the National Parks although it was inevitable that the discussions highlighted some issues which were Park-specific, for example the controversy surrounding 'quiet recreation'. There were advantages, in terms of research costs, in sampling an area with a high concentration of outdoor centres. There is no evidence, however, from a cursory comparison with other studies of outdoor provision, to suggest that the type and range of centre identified in the Parks is fundamentally different to those found throughout the rest of the country (see, for example, Centre for Leisure Research 1995). Equally, although it has been shown that the factors affecting young people's opportunities to participate in outdoor activities are diverse, very few are specific to the National Parks. Even at an environmental and planning policy level, the principles of sustainability which underpin National Park policies, are being embraced by local authorities across England and Wales, whilst National Park practices are being heralded by the Government as a role model for the wider countryside. The main issue is, perhaps, more to do with the nature and quality of experience in the National Parks and whether this can be reproduced elsewhere, a question which lies outwith the scope of this research.

9.3 Overview of Findings - The Dynamics of the Outdoor Sector

The factors affecting young people's opportunities to participate in outdoor activities are shown in Figure 9.1. Whilst providing a convenient framework for the discussion chapters, however, it must be remembered that the context within which outdoor activities occur is constantly changing.

When the study Groups in the Countryside was undertaken in the late 1970s, one of the main concerns was about growing recreational pressures on the countryside, in particular the impact of outdoor activities on the environment and local communities (Dartington Amenity Research Trust 1980). Recreational pressures are still a concern. Indeed, the 1998 Annual Countryside Recreation Conference entitled '*Is the honeypot overflowing? How much recreation can we have?*' aims, as its title suggests, to address the issues associated with continuing recreational growth. There are, however, conflicting views as to the amount of damage being caused by leisure activities. As the House of Commons' inquiry into The Environmental Impact of Leisure Activities has made clear, there is no conclusive evidence to suggest that either the number of visitors to the countryside has significantly increased in recent years or that, compared to other activities, leisure and tourism cause significant widespread ecological damage (House of Commons' Environment Committee 1995). The lack of consensus about the exact nature of recreational impacts means that there has been a wide range of policy and management measures aimed at alleviating pressures. Even across the National Parks, which have a common duty to conserve natural beauty, promote understanding and enjoyment, and foster socio-economic well-being, the formulation and application of policies relating to organised outdoor activities, as the study has shown, are far from consistent. The planning system continues to influence provision for outdoor activities but policy changes are often incremental. The lack of raw data upon which recreational policies are developed, together with the lag time between leisure trends and the planning process, and the difficulties of translating sustainability principles into practice, means that any changes in outdoor provision and outdoor opportunities, as a result of environmental and planning policies, have been slow to manifest themselves. Meanwhile other factors are becoming increasingly important.

Hunt's study, In Search of Adventure highlighted the changes that were occurring within the outdoor industry in the late 1980s, including the expansion in commercial leisure, the increasing professionalisation of organisations and activities, and the growing specialisation of provision (Hunt 1989). Similar observations were made in

the mid 1990s, in Outdoor Activity Centres in Wales (Centre for Leisure Research 1995). The findings from the current study show that these trends are continuing. In particular, there has been a growth in private sector and non-residential provision and an increase in the number of centres offering specialist skills, management training and special interest programmes. The expansion of such niche markets appears to be a direct reflection of the changing fads and fashions in leisure interests and in corporate training philosophies. Consumer demands have led to widespread improvements in services and especially in the quality of provision. Unlike earlier studies, however, which have tended to link diversification of the outdoor sector with increasing opportunities for young people, this research has sounded a note of caution. It has shown, for example, that as centres continue to adapt, specialise and diversify, there has occurred a gradual replacement of younger age groups. The increasing dominance of the private sector and the growing emphasis on consumer satisfaction has tended to favour the adult market. As alternative leisure choices multiply, young people are, themselves, being caught up in a whirl of new leisure pursuits, and outdoor adventurous activities, for some young people at least, appear to be losing their appeal. The general acknowledgement that the link between youth culture and consumerism is little understood means that it is difficult to establish a policy base which actively encourages young people. All the indications are that the youth sector still has a largely passive role in the decision-making process, which can only make the current situation of diminishing opportunities more acute.

In Search of Adventure, like other earlier studies of outdoor provision, recognised the need for effective safety measures for those involved in providing for outdoor adventurous activities. It could not, however, have foreseen the radical reforms which were brought about by the Activity Centres (Young Persons' Safety) Act 1995 and which were precipitated by the Lyme Bay tragedy. The introduction of a compulsory licensing scheme to standardise and improve safety standards across centres, coupled with increasing pressures for greater accountability, has resulted in widespread readjustments within the outdoor industry. The unprecedented amounts of money being paid out, across all kinds of service provision, in compensation

claims, has led operators and leaders of outdoor programmes to be especially cautious in their operations. Evidence has emerged from this study to show that safety reforms are not only affecting young people's opportunities to participate in outdoor activities, but are also starting to undermine the very concept of outdoor adventure. Thus, high risk activities are being removed from outdoor programmes and, as activities are 'dampened down', so the level of personal challenge is often diminished. The introduction of a voluntary licensing scheme, given the numbers of centres that would most likely be affected, would introduce a further dimension to the dynamics of the outdoor sector. According to some of those interviewed in this study, the effect on young people's access to outdoor opportunities would be far more damaging than that seen under the current licensing system.

None of these earlier studies could have anticipated the impact caused by the provisions of the Education Reform Act 1988 on outdoor opportunities. This was only brought to light more recently in Taverner's study Local Education Authority Outdoor Centres as a Resource for Sport and Active Recreation, and, even then, only in relation to public sector centres (Taverner 1994). In particular, Taverner showed that there had been a marked reduction in local authority funding to outdoor centres and a subsequent decline in the range of facilities and services available. As this study has demonstrated, the impact of educational reform has been significant, not only because of the speed at which measures have been introduced, but also because of the importance of local education authorities in providing for outdoor activities. Also, the universality of the reforms has touched every young person of school age within the State sector and almost every type of outdoor operator. The changes that have been brought about, i.e. the shift in the balance to field work from outdoor activities, the replacement of secondary school by primary school groups at outdoor centres, and the local management of schools and its knock-on effects on the financial viability of centres are, it is argued here, having perhaps the most damaging and widespread effect on young people's opportunities to participate in true outdoor activities *at the present time*.

In attempting to assess the relative importance of the above factors, the complexity of the outdoor sector should not be underestimated. The difficulties in trying to differentiate between supply and demand, for example, are acute. The growth in specialist weekend courses at some centres has arisen because of decisions by centre managers to broaden their activity and client base and to tap into more lucrative adult and commercially-based markets. This would not have been possible without the concurrent changes in company training techniques leading to a growing demand for personal development courses. Nor would it have occurred without the introduction of safety reform and the need for specialist skills training. The decline of the traditional two week summer holiday and the growth in year-round short breaks has precipitated the rise in weekend courses.

Similarly, whilst it was convenient, for the purposes of the discussion, to examine in relative isolation the factors affecting young people's opportunities to participate in outdoor activities, in reality the picture is less clear cut. Thus both safety reforms and young people's leisure behaviour have been shown to be responsible for a change in the nature of outdoor activities, including the shift from high to low risk pursuits. Equally, both leisure demands and educational reform - indirectly through centre attempts to increase income - have encouraged centres to diversify their programmes and client base. Similar associations are found throughout the study and serve to reinforce the complexity of the situation.

9.4 The Way Ahead

The study has shown how young people's opportunities to participate in outdoor adventurous activities depend upon the attitudes and actions of a wide range of individuals and organisations, from parents, teachers and schools, outdoor leaders and instructors, to sporting and recreational bodies. Local and central Governments also play a central role in creating the conditions within which outdoor provision can be developed. By focusing here on the outdoor community and making reference to the Sports Governing Bodies, local planning authorities, and educational establishments, it is intended to outline some of the major problems being encountered in promoting outdoor opportunities at the present time, and to make recommendations as to how these might effectively be resolved.

9.4.1 Problems to Overcome

Outdoor centre operators and others, working in the outdoor field to help encourage young people to take part in outdoor activities, face a number of obstacles. These include,

1. *A lack of cohesion* - As the study findings have shown, there is a vast array of outdoor centres owned and managed by public, private and voluntary sector bodies. Most centres tend to operate in relative isolation. Centre interests and the interests of user groups are represented by a wide range of organisations (Figure 9.2). The National Association for Outdoor Education, for example, even though a leading professional organisation within the outdoor sector, is thought to represent less than 2% of the community's interests (Higgins 1998 p.9). The growth of day centres is adding another disparate and, as yet, unquantified dimension to the outdoor industry. This degree of fragmentation means that it is very difficult for the outdoor sector to use most effectively its lobbying power to promote causes which might be to the common good. It is equally difficult, under the existing structure, for external agencies to consult with, or seek advice from, the outdoor sector on matters which

might benefit the majority of operators. Health and Safety Executive attempts to consult the industry over safety guidelines has recently served to highlight the problems arising from this lack of cohesion (Higgins 1997).

2. A poor image - The image of the outdoor sector has suffered a number of setbacks in the 1990s. The Lyme Bay incident, alluded to in earlier chapters, caused widespread concern amongst the public about safety procedures at outdoor centres. Similarly, a number of mountaineering accidents, notably in Scotland in early 1995, led the press to question the safety of mountain adventures and the responsibility of those taking part (Barnes 1998). Press reports on the use of outdoor activity centres by young offenders - 'holidays for hooligans' - have raised questions about the use of public money for such programmes (i.b.i.d.). There was some evidence from the study to suggest that the use of centres for remedial treatment purposes for young offenders was not welcomed by local residents. Television programmes such as Channel 4's 'Cutting Edge' about the John Ridgeway Centre in 1994, and the ITV Central's drama series 'Taggart' in 1998, which portray a 'macho' style of outdoor instruction, do little to help those centres trying to encourage uptake of activities by young people lacking in self confidence and self esteem. Some establishments, including centres owned by the Youth Hostels' Association, are struggling to erase images of rather dowdy and institutionalised provision whilst trying to ensure that modernisation and new styles of management do not alienate long-standing members.

3. Increasing commercialisation - The outdoor sector, along with most other service providers, is undergoing a period of privatisation and commercialisation in which the consumer has an increasing influence on the type of facilities and services on offer. The study has shown that there are growing pressures on public and voluntary sector centres, which until recently have been largely protected from market forces, to compete for business and, in the process, to rationalise and tailor their operations accordingly.

Figure 9.2 Some of the organisations representing the interests of outdoor providers and user groups

Advisory Panels

Antur Cymru
Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres
Association for Management, Education and Development
Association of Residential Providers
Central Council for Physical Recreation
Derbyshire Association for Residential Education
Development Training Advisory Group
English Council for Outdoor Education, Training and Recreation
European Institute of Outdoor Education and Experiential Education
Outdoor Education Advisors Panel
UK Institute for Careers and Qualifications in Outdoor Education, Training and Recreation

National Legislative Organisations

Adventure Activities Industry Advisory Committee
Adventure Activities Licensing Authority
Health and Safety Executive
Tourism Quality Services

Other Organisations

British Activity Holidays Association
Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme
Foundation for Outdoor Adventure
National Association for Outdoor Education
Youth Clubs UK
Youth Hostels' Association

Sports Governing Bodies

British Association of Ski Instructors
British Canoe Union
British Cycling Federation
British Mountaineering Council
British Orienteering Federation
Ramblers' Association
Royal Yachting Association

There is evidence to suggest that at some centres this has led to a reduction in the places available for young people. Some centre managers, when interviewed, openly admitted that their interest in providing for young people was minimal. The Government's recent Consultation Paper Fair Funding : Improving Delegation to Schools, which outlines proposals for a significant increase in the level of financial delegation to State and Grant Maintained schools (Department for Education and Employment 1998a), raises further issues about the future of local authority provision. There is, increasingly, a need for operators to be accountable, both to sponsoring bodies and to client groups, and a requirement to offer 'Best Value'. The interpretation of 'Best Value' differs, however, amongst centre operators, and between operators and user groups. Centre managers suggested, for example, that it could be measured in terms of course costs and content, or in terms of performance-related benefits, such as school examination performance, or in terms of social and personal development and the acquisition of 'life-skills'. Course costs, as it has been seen, often determine the uptake of activities. There is also increasing pressure on schools to demonstrate that residential courses (either at their own local education authority centres or elsewhere) benefit directly school work.

4. Changing leisure interests - Young people's leisure interests have moved a long way from the 'traditional' school recreation and youth movements. As Roberts (1983) has observed,

'By the 1960s Outward Bound and other adventure training schemes had learnt that young people were no longer queuing for four weeks in the countryside, but debating whether to accept offers of sponsorship. Many had no desire to leave boyfriends and girlfriends, and other leisure interests' (p. 179).

Recent years have seen a rise in home-based leisure pursuits and the evolution of more sedentary lifestyles, especially amongst young people. The signs are that technological advances will continue to whet young people's appetite for television, video and computer entertainment. The development of virtual reality technology

means that individuals can now immerse themselves in outdoor sport and recreational activities through different sensory experiences without leaving the house. It will soon be possible to play convincing team games with people living miles away. A prototype for mountain-based adventures has already been developed (Rheingold 1991). The demand for entertainment simulation is evidenced by the growing popularity of fun and theme parks, their success formula being a mix of addictive experience and heightened expectations of fear. The impact of these leisure changes on the outdoor sector is difficult to predict. Some outdoor centres, albeit a limited number, are already showing signs of a shift in the nature of activities as they try to entice young people to take up outdoor courses. To bow unreservedly to consumer demands, however, carries the risk of diminishing the real value of the outdoor experience. As Barnes (1998) warns,

'The...consumer-led route raises the spectre of an outdoor industry which revolves around corporate owned theme-park centres where ever higher and more complex rope courses are built in order to satisfy a public demand for 'excitement without danger'...like the ghost at the banquet, is the highly qualified professional instructor with a shiny corporate uniform, a mobile phone, a book of rules, a fixed grin and no love of the outdoors'

(Barnes 1998, p.13).

9.4.2 Recommendations for the Future

Given the pressures outlined above, there would appear to be a number of options open to the outdoor sector to help ensure that young people's outdoor opportunities are safeguarded. These might include,

1. *A new organisation* - There is, perhaps, a need for a new organisation to represent the interests of the industry and its clients, to provide a forum for debate, and to co-ordinate political action. Lamb (1997) has already drawn parallels between the outdoor sector and indoor sports and leisure centres which are now represented by the Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management and which, he argues, has added a

professional, corporate and cohesive dimension to indoor leisure management. In a very different context, Wildlife Link, which was formed to provide a liaison committee for conservation organisations nation-wide, proved an effective lobbying machine during the passage of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, uniting a disparate band of conservation bodies (Rogers 1985).

There are a number of existing organisations within the outdoor community which, to some extent, fulfil the above objectives. The Council for Outdoor Education, Training and Recreation, for example, acts as an umbrella body to draw together the principal representative organisations across public, private and voluntary sectors operating in the outdoor field. At the practitioners level, the National Association for Outdoor Education, which aims to further the understanding, support and delivery of effective outdoor education, helps to promote the exchange of information, offers advice on safety, training and insurance, assists with research projects, and lobbies for better outdoor learning opportunities for young people. It does not, however, represent fully the wide range of interests within the outdoor sector and, as the study findings indicate, membership amongst voluntary and private sector centres, compared to local authority centres, is low. This may be about to change. Recent weeks, for example, have seen the name National Association for Outdoor Education replaced by the 'Association for Outdoor Learning', a decision which has been directly triggered by the need to cater for a wider range of outdoor practitioners. If this tactic works - and potential members can be persuaded to join the organisation - then perhaps the newly-named Association, given its existing level of experience and expertise in working with the youth sector, and its existing parliamentary links through the Council for Outdoor Education, Training and Recreation, would be best placed to take the lead in representing the industry as a whole.

2. *A new image* - Despite the adverse publicity of recent years, the outdoor community boasts a long history of achievement in creating opportunities for outdoor adventure, and has a hard core of dedicated amateurs and professionals who

are committed to enhancing the social and personal development of young people through outdoor programmes. The UK is recognised as one of the leading nations in outdoor adventure and its European links are currently being strengthened (Loynes 1997). There remains a need, however, to convince parents, youth leaders, teachers, and young people themselves, that the industry is safe, responsible, professional and modern, and can offer enjoyable, quality and effective programmes. This can be achieved by:

- a) determining the efficacy of outdoor activity programmes,
- b) involving young people in the evaluation of outdoor programmes,
- c) assessing the impact of the licensing scheme,
- d) promoting outdoor centres as models of good practice.

a) *Determining the efficacy of outdoor activity programmes* - A review of research on outdoor adventure programmes by Barrett (1995) suggests that there is little systematic analysis into the outcomes of these programmes, that many projects are small in scale, and that little research has been carried out in the UK. Barrett suggests that any one of the 'ingredients' of outdoor adventure, such as the centre aims and values, the learning environment, the group dimension, the relationship with centre staff, the sequence of activities, or the 'adventure' element itself, may have a significant impact on the personal and social development of the young people involved. However, although a number of studies show, for example, that significant short-term changes can result from outdoor adventure programmes, very few trace or describe the processes that lead to the outcomes. This makes it impossible to ascertain which aspects of the programme are most effective. This study endorses Barrett's view that more research should be focused on the 'ingredients' of outdoor adventure and the relationships between process and outcome. Developing such a robust research base would add weight to the justification for outdoor programmes and may help to convince those who are sceptical about their benefits.

b) *Involving young people in the evaluation of outdoor programmes* - Some centres set time aside at the end of outdoor programmes for course evaluation, although the study findings suggest that the majority seek no feedback from user groups. Young people's accounts of their outdoor adventurous experiences are hard to find. This study sought young people's attitude to outdoor adventure by questioning those involved in organising and supervising outdoor activities. This was considered the only feasible alternative given the time frame of the research project, although it is acknowledged that this approach is far from ideal. Certainly, in view of the changes taking place in leisure activities, more consideration should be given to involving young people in the evaluation, and possibly the construction of, activity programmes. Although, as Roberts (1983) has pointed out, there is probably no single form of leisure provision, no 'right' club or centre, that will voluntarily attract all young people, giving them the chance to be involved in the development of outdoor programmes may help to achieve a balance between ensuring the integrity of such programmes and providing an enjoyable experience.

c) *Assessing the impact of the licensing scheme* - The introduction of a compulsory safety licensing scheme may have helped to quell public concern about the safety of outdoor programmes. However, a large number of centres remain outside of the scheme and its long term effect on the quality of provision, given the current emphasis on qualifications rather than experience, is unknown. Proposals to introduce voluntary licensing, based on the compulsory scheme, are also causing concern. It would seem an appropriate time, therefore, to examine the effects of the scheme on centre operations, and to determine the number of centres which, as a direct result of licensing, no longer cater for the under 18s. Further work is also required to determine the exact nature of changes in outdoor programmes and to consider exactly what this means in terms of the concept of outdoor adventure.

d) *Promoting outdoor centres as models of good practice* - Much work has been done at some centres to improve environmental practice in day to day operations and to raise socio-cultural and environmental awareness. Some of the measures adopted

have been described in earlier chapters. Such examples of good practice should be widely publicised through the Association for Outdoor Learning and encouraged, wherever possible, through grant aid from sporting and countryside agencies. The Association should, in collaboration with centres and schools, set up a training programme for teachers who have not themselves trained in environmental education but are involved in outdoor learning programmes.

3. *Building links* - If the outdoor community is going to survive the current changes and continue to support young people's participation in outdoor activities, it will need to strengthen its links with other establishments and organisations, in particular,

a) *The Sports Governing Bodies* - The study findings show that collaboration between outdoor centres and the Sports Governing Bodies is poor, and yet the latter could play a pivotal role in facilitating outdoor opportunities for young people. They could, for example, help to raise the profile of young people's involvement in outdoor activities undertaken from outdoor centres. They could increase their support for access to outdoor and residential learning experiences, through the preparation and promotion of policy documents. Equally, they could promote the benefits of outdoor adventurous activities to potential participants, parents, schools, and the public at large. The Sports Governing Bodies are well placed to disseminate information on outdoor opportunities, including those available through activity centres, to educational establishments, youth groups and others. In the process, their own codes of conduct and centres of good practice could be promoted, and outdoor providers encouraged to develop, implement and monitor appropriate environmental policies. Given the importance of the Youth Hostels' Association and Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme as means of accessing the outdoors, the Sports Governing Bodies could strengthen their links with these, and other, key youth sector providers. The Sports Governing Bodies could assist in other ways, for example, by raising centre awareness of grant aid schemes, particularly as costs, both to centres and participants, are becoming a crucial factor in determining the number of places available to young people. They could also assist in the training of

potential group leaders, and especially in the skills required to work with young people.

b) Local Planning Authorities - Over one half of the centres covered in the study admitted to having only occasional contact with the National Park Authorities and a few centres had no contact at all. There are, however, within the Parks' organisational structures, a number of levels at which links could be strengthened, for example, through the ranger services, youth and school liaison officers, planning officers, and through information and education services. Better communication between outdoor centres and these services could assist the National Park Authorities in their efforts to promote understanding of the special qualities of the Parks. It could also open up opportunities for joint initiatives, such as those outlined in previous chapters, which have been shown to improve relationships between centres and local communities. Given that local planning authorities are advised by the Government to undertake research and monitoring as part of the statutory planning process, better links between the outdoor community and planners could provide opportunities for joint research programmes. The study has indicated that there is a need to develop a comprehensive database on outdoor provision and to monitor changes in centre facilities and visitor use. As a part of this process, young people's access to outdoor provision could be kept under review. The Park Authorities' duty to consider the social and economic well-being of communities could also be reflected through research programmes. For example, the relationship between outdoor centres and the local economy could be examined and ways of enhancing local benefits investigated. Greater consideration could be given, in assessing planning applications, to the dual use of facilities between centre users and the local community. Planning authorities, through the public participation process, could encourage young people to take a more pro-active role in the planning of sport and recreation provision.

Although these recommendations are directed largely at the National Park Authorities, their application is much wider. The duty to consider social and

economic well-being, for example, is reinforced and extended to all local authorities under the Government's White Paper 'Modern Government: In Touch with the People' (Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions 1998b). In view of the study findings on policies for outdoor provision, it is recommended that all local planning authorities assess applications relating to centre development on merit rather than, in some cases, adopting blanket policies of refusal. The creation of recreational zones to help guide policy decisions on centre development might assist in this process. It may be that National Park Authorities should investigate the recommendation that '*the open spaces of National Parks and other protected areas should normally be used for progression to those activities in which remoteness and solitude are an important part of the experience*' (Hunt 1989, p.242). In any case, there should be a strategic plan for outdoor provision, which links neighbouring authorities, and which includes both urban and rurally-based development. More consideration should also be given to linking centre development with rural transport services. This would help to further policies for sustainable development and to overcome some of the difficulties encountered by young people and other user groups in accessing centres and sites.

c) Educational Establishments - Schools have always provided one of the major routes through which young people can obtain access to the outdoors and, with the help of outdoor centres, schools can advise pupils, parents and teachers on outdoor learning opportunities. To this end, it is recommended that, within each educational establishment, someone is nominated to act as a focal point for outdoor education and to establish and maintain links with the outdoor sector. Given the growing emphasis, within schools, on field studies and performance-related activities, schools should attempt to quantify the 'added value' of outdoor adventurous activities, and to promote, to the Government, potential employers and others, the importance of life skills developed through outdoor adventure programmes. Wherever possible, they should take up the outdoor adventurous activities option within the National Curriculum. Given the expressed concerns, in the study, over the potential loss of the residential experience, educational establishments could take advantage of the

strength of the teaching unions to lobby for Government support on this issue. Schools and colleges could work more closely with outdoor centres and the Sports Governing Bodies on initiatives to improve outdoor access and, jointly, put pressure on the English Sports Council to re-think its current policies for sports development in the context of equitable provision.

Government resources continue to be directed, through the Educational Task Force, at improving standards in the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic. Furthermore, no assurances have been given in terms of funding residential courses for young people. There are, nevertheless, signs that outdoor activities are assuming a slightly higher profile in current Government thinking.

Outdoor activities may be able to benefit, for example, from the New Opportunities Fund, established under the National Lottery Act 1998. Extending Opportunity : A National Framework for Study Support, which outlines plans to invest £200 million from the Fund into out-of-school learning activities, makes specific reference to sports, games and outdoor activities (Department for Education and Employment 1998b). The report points to the benefits these activities can bring, in creating '*well motivated, independent young people who will become life-long learners*' (p.5), in stimulating and reinforcing a positive attitude to education, and in helping to improve teacher-pupil and pupil-pupil relationships. Importantly, the document suggests that such activities can offer '*opportunities for achievement to pupils across the spectrum of academic ability*' (p. 25). The fund is open to applicants in the spring of 1999.

Furthermore, the Government's consultation paper Fair Funding: Improving Delegation to Schools, although outlining proposals for improved delegation, makes clear its intention to transfer responsibility for music services to the national Standards Fund in order to safeguard provision and goes on to state,

'The arguments for treating musicians as a special case could be extended to a number of other LEA-controlled budgets that widen the range of pupils' educational experience. These budgets may support (for example) outdoor education centres...The Government would welcome views'

(Department for Education and Employment 1998a, p17).

If the words of Chris Smith, Secretary of State for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, are to be believed, when he announced in June 1997 that 'sport for all' was back on the political agenda, it would seem that there has never been a better time, in recent years, for all of those concerned about securing outdoor opportunities for young people to make their views known.

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OXFORD
BROOKES
UNIVERSITY



OUTDOOR ACTIVITY CENTRES
PROMOTING OPPORTUNITIES FOR
YOUNG PEOPLE

Do you believe in the value of outdoor adventure? If so, please help with this research by answering a few questions

ALL REPLIES ARE CONFIDENTIAL

A research project funded by the Economic and Social

Research Council

APPENDIX 3 Continued

10 What is the **maximum** number of visitors the centre can accommodate at any one time?

- Residential (permanent accommodation)*
- Residential (non-permanent e.g. tents)*
- Day use only*

11 How many of the following facilities / services are available?

(Tick one or more boxes)

- Cooked meals* 1
- Specialised equipment/kit for outdoor activities* 2
- Walking boots/wellingtons* 3
- Wet weather clothing* 4
- Information on public transport* 5
- Information on walking and cycling routes* 6
- Information on recommended activity sites* 7

12 Is the centre easily accessible by bus and / or train?

(Please mark the line with a 'x')

Very accessible _____ very inaccessible

13 Does the centre provide a 'pick up' service to / from the nearest bus / train station?

Yes No

14 Does the centre,

- Provide its own tutors / instructors?*
- Rely solely on visiting tutors / instructors?*
- Use both internal and external staff?*

15 Within the last 10 years, have there been any significant changes at the centre in ...

(Please tick one or more boxes and give details. Use space overleaf if necessary)

Ownership/management?

Centre funding?

Bedspaces?

Opening times?

Facilities?

Staffing levels?

Other?

Section Two : About the Visitors

16 Is the centre open to.....

- Groups only?*
- Individuals only?*
- Both individuals and groups?*

17 What percentage of the total number of visitors per year are aged 14-18 yrs (If the answer is 0%, please go to Q.21)

.....%

18 For this age-band, i.e. 14-18 yrs, what percentage live within:

- A 50 mile radius*%
- 50-100 mile radius*%
- > 100 miles*%
- 100%

19 For this age-band, i.e. 14-18 yrs, please indicate a) the main user group and b) other users

- | | <u>Main user</u>
(Tick one) | <u>Other users</u>
(Tick one or more) |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| <i>Secondary Schools</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 |
| <i>Further Education Groups</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 |
| <i>Private / Commercial Sector</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 |
| <i>Youth Groups (e.g. scouts)</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 |
| <i>Welfare / Religious Groups</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |
| <i>Informal Groups / Individuals</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> 6 |
| <i>Others, please specify</i> | | |

20 Within the last 10 years, have there been any significant changes in the profile of user groups? If so, please give details:

.....

.....

21 What factors, if any, discourage or prevent 14-18 yr olds from visiting the centre? Is it:

(Tick one or more box)

- Lack of information on the opportunities available?* 1
- Inability / unwillingness to meet course costs?* 2
- Lack / cost of transport?* 3
- Licensing restrictions?* 4
- Lack of centre staff?* 5
- Other reasons? Please specify*.....

Section Three : About the Activities

22 Please list THREE outdoor adventurous activities (e.g. fell-walking, climbing, canoeing) in which visitors commonly take part, and a site / location known to be used for these activities

	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Site / Location</i>
1.
2.
3.

23 Please indicate why, in your opinion, these sites / locations are used. Is it because.....(For each activity, tick one or more boxes)

	<i>act 1</i>	<i>act 2</i>	<i>act 3</i>
<i>They provide the best natural resource?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁
<i>They are easily accessible?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂
<i>They have always been used?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃
<i>The centre has exclusive use of them?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄
<i>The centre / visitors are advised to use them</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
<i>Other reason, please specify</i>			
.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆
.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> ₇

24 Is there any liaison between the centre staff and other interest groups on the use of these sites?

	<i>Landowner</i>	<i>Sports Bodies</i>	<i>National Park</i>	<i>Local Community</i>	<i>Other Users</i>
<i>Regularly</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Frequently</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Occasionally</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Never</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you would like to add any comments, please feel free to do so on the back page.

If you have any queries, or would like more information on the research project, please contact Helen Houghton, School of Planning, Oxford Brookes University, on (01865) 484065.

Thank you very much for your help.

APPENDIX 4 - Interview Proforma

Public Sector

1. What is the centre's policy on outdoor adventure*?
2. What percentage of centre funding comes from the local authority's central revenue budget? What other sources of income are available?
3. Are there any restrictions on student intake? Is priority given, for example, to students living within the authority or to local schools?
4. Is outreach work undertaken with local schools or within the local community?
5. Are local schools, clubs and youth groups actively encouraged to attend the centre and, if so, how?
6. What, in your opinion, determines the level of use of the centre. Is it, for example, related to cost, timetable restrictions, lack of interest?
7. Have there been any changes in centre activities or the mix of visitor groups in recent years? What factors, in your opinion, have caused these changes?
8. Does the centre have links with other providers of outdoor activities such as the Sports Governing Bodies, Sports Council? Is it involved in joint initiatives e.g. with other local authorities?
9. Are you aware of any conflicts of interest which have arisen as a result of activities and, if so, how have these been resolved?
10. How do you see the future of the centre, in terms of, for example, funding, management, user groups, types of activity? What, if anything, will impede its development?

* In the context of this research, 'outdoor adventure' means outdoor activities such as walking, climbing, canoeing, which are undertaken as a group and involve a residential experience including camping

Cont...

APPENDIX 4 - Continued

Voluntary Sector

1. What importance does your organisation place on outdoor adventure provision in young people*?
2. How are policies for this type of activity formulated and operationalised?
How are the initiatives financed?
3. To what extent does the organisation rely on other providers, for example, for accommodation, outdoor activity instruction?
4. What, in your opinion, determines the level of use of the centre? Is it, for example, individual interest, peer influence, level of provision, cost?
5. Does the organisation actively encourage disadvantaged groups and, if so, in what way?
6. Have there been any changes in recent years in uptake or provision? How do you account for these?
7. Do the outdoor activities form part of a wider programme, for example environmental or cultural education and, if so, how is this delivered?
8. Are you aware of any conflicts of interest which have arisen as a result of activities and, if so, how have these been resolved?
9. Does the organisation have links with other outdoor activity providers or undertake joint outdoor adventure initiatives?
10. How do you see the future of the centre, for example, in terms of funding, type of visitor, type of activity? What, if anything will impede its development?

* In the context of this research, 'outdoor adventure' means outdoor activities such as walking, climbing, canoeing, which are undertaken as a group and involve a residential experience including camping

Cont...

APPENDIX 4 - Continued

Private Sector

1. What do you perceive as the main benefits, to your clients, of outdoor adventure*?
2. What type of visitors (e.g. age range, group size, parent organisation) take part in your courses and what sort of activity do they undertake?
3. What changes, if any, have you observed in the outdoor activity market in recent years?
4. How has your organisation adapted to these changes?
5. Apart from client demand, what factors have encouraged or restricted growth?
6. How important is the youth sector to your business? Do you actively target this sector?
7. Does your organisation have links with other providers of outdoor activities such as the Sports Council, Sports Governing Bodies?
8. To what extent do environmental and social considerations affect your activities? Do they, for example, determine or influence the sites you use?
9. Have there been any conflicts of interest between your organisation's activities and the activities of other interest groups? If so, how have these been resolved?
10. How do you see the future of the business in terms of, for example, client profile and demand, type of course offered, location of activities? What, if anything, will impede its development ?

* In the context of this research, 'outdoor adventure' means outdoor activities such as walking, climbing, canoeing, which are undertaken as a group and involve a residential experience including camping

APPENDIX 5 Example of outdoor activity centre consent form

DEAR PARENT,

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION BEFORE YOU SIGN THE CONSENT FORM AT THE BOTTOM OF THE PAGE.

Environmental and Outdoor Education Centre is funded by the County Council Youth Service and is their permanent Residential Outdoor Activity base in-Wales. This centre is an Educational establishment that provides educational courses and personal / social development programmes for young people. These courses are not holidays; however, fun and enjoyment will always be an essential ingredient for any course at

We use outdoor education as a medium for young people to experience challenging, adventurous and exciting activities. This course will offer our students a unique opportunity to heighten their self-esteem and confidence and become more self-reliant. This is achieved within the framework of our safety procedures and codes of practice. It is one of our main objectives to help young people gain a better knowledge and understanding of their abilities, strengths and weaknesses and it is an essential part of any programme at to help them achieve this. The residential side of the course is designed to promote teamwork amongst the group and develop a responsibility towards others.

The activity programme has been planned and agreed in advance by the party leader and the Manager of It is designed to meet any curriculum based requirements for the group and the activities will be tailored to suit the age and ability of the young people. Students who come on our courses are expected to participate in all of the activities on the agreed programme, unless there is a known medical disability that prohibits them from a specific activity (it is therefore essential that you provide us with any relevant medical information in the section on the form over-leaf).

Please be assured that Instructional staff are fully qualified and have many years of experience in teaching and leading young people in adventurous activities. We carefully consider the age, ability / disability of the student group and take note of conditions that will prevail before we decide as to the appropriate level and duration of activity / challenge.

Students are asked to inform their Instructor if they have any serious fear or uncertainty about the intended activity. Where necessary, our Instructional staff will offer additional support to students and encourage them to face up to their fear, overcome their problem and successfully complete the activity. At times it is possible that a student may become cold, wet, and tired as our activities are designed to be adventurous and challenging. The Instructor will be on hand to carefully and closely monitor the situation so that it should not become beyond the capabilities and training of the young person.

We would appreciate your co-operation and support when decisions and arrangements are made about your child's welfare by the Instructor in charge of the activity.

Yours sincerely

CONSENT OF PARENT / GUARDIAN

I am willing for my child / ward to take part in the activity course and confirm that he / she is, to the best of my knowledge, not suffering from, or has not suffered from any ailment or the effects of any ailment, which could make him / her unsuitable to participate in the course.

In the event of an emergency arising during my child / ward's participation in the activities involved in this course, I give permission for the leader in charge to take any necessary action regarding medical attention if it is impossible for myself or my wife / husband / partner to be contacted.

Signed.....Parent / Guardian Date

Name and telephone of family Doctor.....

APPENDIX 6 Example of outdoor activity centre safety contract

SAFETY CONTRACT

This is a Safety Contract between the and

.....
Course Number

The course will take place from until

(incorporating a turn over on everyday). During this period, the

Centre's staff will be responsible for safety during controlled activities (except

..... when

will be responsible).

At all other times, the residential responsibilities for the course will be with the course

leader, who is

Although the Centre's staff may be resident on the premises during night times, the group leaders are not free of their responsibility towards their group. The Centre's staff will be available to assist group leaders in extenuating circumstances, if requested, and at times when emergency procedures are in operation. Group leaders will be responsible for the good behaviour of the group at the Centre, and in the surrounding neighbourhood.

The following controlled activities are planned

.....
.....
Should a group leader be unable to discharge group responsibilities, the Director, or his nominee, will assume authority for the well-being of the group.

At the outset of a visit, it will be the responsibility of the group leader to provide the Centre with the contact names, addresses and telephone numbers of each member of the party for the Centre's use in the case of an emergency or incident.

The Centre's Director and instructors have the right to alter or cancel the programme in the interest of safety. The programme may also be curtailed by the group leaders, but only after consultation with, and agreement of, the Director, or one of his instructors.

The Centre's Director and instructors will confer with group leaders at all stages relating to activities and planned programmes, and every attempt will be made by the Centre's staff to co-operate with, and obtain the co-operation of, the group leaders, and will do this in strict observance of the Centre's Terms and Conditions, and Safety Procedures.

Cont.....

APPENDIX 6 Continued

Any chemicals brought to the Centre by
will be the responsibility of
who will ensure that the relevant COSHH Regulations are observed and followed.

Any vehicle brought to the Centre by the group must be fully insured by the group, and in a serviceable and roadworthy condition. The Centre does not accept responsibility for any vehicles other than its own, and users of the Centre's transport will comply with the Vehicle Terms and Conditions of Use.

Centre is insured for Third Party Public Liability to the value of £2 million. A group's personal belongings are only insured for theft, on the premises. The group will be responsible for insuring its own property, outside of the Centre.

All group participants must complete the Centre's Medical Form in advance of the visit, and submit the detail to the Director upon its arrival.

Emergency procedures, as defined in the Centre's Safety Manual, will be observed by the visiting group, and its leaders.

Particulars of any special arrangements
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Declaration. As group leader of
I have read the Centre's Terms and Conditions, Vehicle Terms and Conditions of Use, and Safety Manual, and agree to comply with set down operational procedures.

SIGNED
NAME (in capitals)
Date

DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE
Date

NB. This Safety Contract must be signed and dated by each party, and duplicated so that each has a copy.