

National Outdoor Recreation Strategy

- Preliminary Review of Strategies



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1. Introduction and context

The Outdoor Industries Association (OIA) and the Sport and Recreation Alliance (Alliance) have been asked by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to consult with the outdoor recreation sector on what could be included in a national strategy for outdoor recreation. This builds on recent evidence demonstrating the economic value of outdoor recreation, which provided additional impetus for political lobbying from the sector. The result was cross-party support for a strategy to drive outdoor recreation, by providing clear direction and coordination for the sector.

This report does not provide an in-depth analysis or detailed literature review of this area, but evaluates a selection of recent strategies to help identify learning, best practice and opportunities and from these provides a series of recommendations for national strategy development. There are some strategies included whereby 'successes / impacts' are not known, and others where comprehensive information was not available within the public domain. The strategies included in this review represent a good cross-section of related areas including sport, events and tourism, in addition to outdoor recreation.

Due to timescale and resource limitations this report has included input from three members of Sheffield Hallam University's (SHU) Outdoor Recreation Research Group (ORRG): Professor Lynn Crowe (Department of the Natural and Built Environment), Dr. Rob Copeland (Centre for Sport and Exercise Sciences) and Maxine Gregory (Sport Industry Research Centre). The group has a broad range of expertise across key outdoor recreation areas including: assessing value, quantifying economic and social impacts, exploring the benefits of technology, environmental conservation and countryside management, increasing participation and promoting tourism. We are well placed to offer expert advice on strategic development going forwards, particularly in relation to: an audit of existing literature and policy; investigating themes and key issues; gathering insight; providing expert opinion and facilitating stakeholder involvement.

In terms of structure, this report continues with an overview section to highlight key learning from the review. Following this the detailed review of each strategy is summarised. Finally the report concludes with a discussion of the challenges faced and success factors identified, along with a series of recommendations.

2. Summary of findings

This overview section highlights the key areas of learning emerging from this review. It provides our opinion of what is necessary to produce an effective strategy in the format of core recommendations:

2.1 Don't re-invent the wheel

The first key finding from this process was that many of the documents included in the review had common themes and characteristics. There are components that are common to all strategies and as a result it is our opinion that there is no need to 'reinvent the wheel' by starting from an entirely blank sheet of paper. That said, a good strategy needs to reflect local context and priorities and substantial consultation is required to ensure local engagement with the vision. However there is a strong case for learning from others and using existing strategies, particularly relevant UK ones, such as the Northern Ireland Outdoor Recreation Strategy, the Welsh Outdoor Adventure Strategy and VisitEngland, to inform the first stages of development.

2.2 A partnership approach is essential

A successful strategy needs to be owned by the sector. In order to achieve this it is vital to work in partnership to produce, implement and track progress of the strategy. Groundwork has already been undertaken to bring together key partners, however the sector remains somewhat fragmented due to its highly diverse nature. This is particularly true of the commercial sector. The OIA and Alliance have been pivotal in providing leadership and direction, but there is still work to be done to get the sector speaking the same language and working in a coordinated way. There is a need for wide-scale involvement and commitment in this process: public agencies (such as VisitEngland, Sport England), non-government organisations (such as the National Trust), representative bodies (such as the Alliance, OIA and Outdoor Recreation Network) and National Governing Bodies of sport, all have a key role to play. It is also important to acknowledge the cross-sector support that is needed to achieve success whilst ensuring that involvement from other areas is clear and focused.

The Northern Ireland Outdoor Recreation Strategy was produced as a cross-sector project with involvement from the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment; the Minister of Culture Arts and Leisure; and the Minister of the Environment. As a result of this wide engagement and support there is evidence that strategy outputs have been achieved quickly. An appropriate system to outline who is responsible for specific deliverables and a system of tracking progress which involves multiple partners is essential for maintaining engagement and ownership of the strategy over time.

"A national policy and action plan provides direction, support and coordination of the many sectors involved". Toronto Charter

2.3 A strategy, a vision or an action plan? What are we trying to do?

There are a great many things that would be desirable to achieve through a collaborative and well-supported national outdoor recreation strategy, however it is recommended that the strategic focus is clear, concise and suitably focused. Particularly in the current time of austerity, trying to be 'everything to everybody' is likely to result in impact that cannot be clearly evidenced or is diluted. The 'strategies' that we reviewed ranged from vision statements, to detailed long-term strategies, to short-term, more focused action planning. The role and purpose of the strategy needs to be clear - is it to coordinate the sector, to set a blueprint for delivery, to raise profile, or to deliver cross-sector impacts?

The style and format of some strategic documents is to present a clear vision in a high-impact, visual way - they do not include the details of how this will be achieved or action plans within the main glossy document. It is important to be clear on what the main strategy document is aiming to do and then to tailor its content, style and format accordingly. It is likely that a strategy vision would be underpinned by a pragmatic action plan containing detailed aims, indicators, required staffing and resources, key individuals responsible, timescales and possibly an indication of priority levels.

"Essentially it's the balance between a great big vision that people can get behind and sufficient detail to suggest it can happen, but not so much that people feel like there's no room for them to contribute".
Rob Copeland

2.4 Appropriate timeframes / duration

The most appropriate timetable for the strategy should be agreed by project stakeholders. However it is suggested that an over-arching strategic vision should be a long-term objective (maybe ten years). But this needs to be supported by a flexible action plan focused on short and medium-term objectives that can be adapted as required to ensure that the goals remain achievable. Many strategies span long-time periods (e.g. Scotland's physical activity strategy was a 20-year plan), however some of these were supported by shorter-term 'action plans' which can be monitored on a regular basis (anything from quarterly to annually to three yearly) and therefore can be responsive to political movement and changes to organisational structures, resources and capacity. The pragmatic approach enables the strategy to evolve and ensures that it remains relevant if there are major changes in the sector or political landscape.

For example, Portland Parks and Recreation includes a three-year strategic plan *"providing actions in the near term, allowing the organisation to respond to a changing external environment and its current internal situation"*, in addition to its twenty-year vision to *"set a compelling direction"* for the organisation.

2.5 Ambition v's realism?

The appropriate combination of ambition and realism is required to make the strategy achievable. It is good to set very challenging targets but not in a way that fails to motivate partners. In addition to very ambitious overarching objectives, it is also necessary to set smaller goals (by agreeing performance indicators and benchmarks) to track progress along the way to demonstrate impact and distance travelled over the short term. Furthermore there needs to be a robust system established for tracking progress and monitoring success, and for communicating strategy achievements.

2.6 Significant consultation

A fundamental requirement for developing a strategy that represents the sector and encourages greater collaboration and coordination is undertaking sufficient consultation, both at the initial planning stages and during the early development of the strategy. Wide-scale consultation was a characteristic of almost all strategy reviews. An example of the size and scale of consultation undertaken is provided by Northern Ireland's Action Plan and Shropshire's Countrywide Access Strategy.

In the case of a local strategy, Shropshire conducted a survey with over 2,500 respondents, along with more detailed consultation of the public predominantly via voluntary groups such as Cycle and Access Forums. At national level in Northern Ireland a series of public consultation events were held, along with a survey and discussion groups. As a minimum requirement to adopting good practice, both

stakeholder and public consultation is required. This should be done in an open way where direction and decisions can be influenced and the result is not pre-determined. Further guidance on appropriate and effective consultation can be provided if required.

2.7 Style and substance

Whilst the majority of these recommendations are focused on the process of developing a strategy, which will in turn contribute to ensuring that the content is right, the style of the strategy is also critically important. Visually, the strategy needs to make people want to pick it up to read it. It needs to be professional, concise and illustrated with photos and graphics. It is suggested that there are different options for different audiences, including an executive summary for people who just want the headlines. In several cases (e.g. VisitEngland) this short visual overview is the main strategy document, with the operational content sat behind this. This type of approach should be considered. It is also necessary to keep the language simple, conversational and positive in tone to ensure that the document is easy to read. The Alliance's 'Reconomics' report is a great example of a series of outputs that were visual, available in different formats and captured attention.

3. Strategy reviews

The strategies involved in this review are listed below, along with relevant hyperlinks:

- 3.1 Northern Ireland Outdoor Recreation Strategy
<http://www.sportni.net/sportni/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Our-Great-Outdoors.pdf>
- 3.2 Welsh Outdoor Adventure Strategy
<http://www.snowdonia-active.com/upload/documents/North%20Wales%20Outdoor%20Sector%20Report%201-2.pdf>
- 3.3 New Zealand National Outdoor Recreation Plan
<http://www.sportnz.org.nz/assets/Uploads/attachments/About-us/Outdoor-Recreation-Strategy-2009-15.pdf>
- 3.4 A More Active Scotland: Building a Legacy from the Commonwealth Games
<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0044/00444577.pdf>
- 3.5 VisitEngland Tourism Strategy
https://www.visitengland.com/sites/default/files/downloads/strategic_framework_for_tourism_document_1.pdf
- 3.6 Active in the Outdoors Peak District Recreation Strategy and Action Plan
http://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/79196/recreationstrategy.pdf
- 3.7 Portland Parks and Recreation: Strategic Plan 2012-15
<http://www.portlandoregon.gov/parks/article/418535>
- 3.8 Forests for People: Access, recreation and tourism on the national forest estate. Forestry Commission Scotland.
[http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/fcfc114.pdf/\\$FILE/fcfc114.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/fcfc114.pdf/$FILE/fcfc114.pdf)
- 3.9 Additional documents considered / consulted

This section provides a summary of each strategy from the detail that was publically available. Each summary begins with an overview of methodology, process, structure and a rationale for inclusion. Where possible, discussion of any successes of the strategy and the challenges still faced is also provided, along with additional interpretation.

3.1 Northern Ireland Outdoor Recreation Strategy 'Our Great Outdoors'

3.1.1 Method / process

This strategy document is described as an 'Action Plan'. This description highlights the practical nature of the document, its dynamic format (frequently reviewed and updated), and the clear intention that it should act as a driver for change, rather than a strategy document which would 'collect dust' on a shelf somewhere. It is a seven year plan to 2020 aiming to develop: "*a culture of dynamic, sustainable outdoor recreation in Northern Ireland*" through a coordinated approach which demonstrates a strong commitment to realising the value of the outdoors.

Firstly, it is important to note that this Action Plan was developed over a 2-3 year period. This timescale was considered to be 'realistic' due to the process undertaken to engage and involve a wide range of key stakeholders. The Action Plan is the result of a joint approach between a range of Government Departments and Agencies. It has cross-sector support which reflects the nature of outdoor recreation to deliver across a wide range of agendas including those cited in the plan 'social exclusion, rural and urban deprivation and community cohesion'. It contains forewords from the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment; the Minister of Culture Arts and Leisure; and the Minister of the Environment to illustrate this cross-sectional support.

The inclusive partnership approach has allowed consideration of many different facets within the strategy, key priorities cited include: the sustainable and responsible management of assets and ecosystems, the opportunities for economic development, increasing participation (linked to 'Sport Matters'), promoting tourism, tackling poverty and social exclusion, and the showcasing of iconic outdoor landscapes. The methodology was to commission external consultants (Outplan and G and L Hughes) to prepare nine Issues Papers, then to undertake extensive consultation (including eight public meetings, surveys, mind-mapping and discussion groups) to consider consultation responses in detail and produce a draft. This was followed by a final statutory consultation process and then the final Action Plan was issued. This process took 2.5 years.

3.1.2 Structure

The plan is split into six core themes, with between four and seven specific actions stated within each theme. Each action is outlined in detail and the lead body, key partners and success indicators are stated.

- Structures and Partnerships
- Legislation, Policy and Responsibilities
- Making the Outdoors More Accessible
- Investment of Time, Energy and Resources
- Communication, Marketing and Promotion
- Research and Monitoring

3.1.3 Rationale for inclusion

This plan is well known and within its first full year of implementation has already achieved significant success. Of the 33 stated actions in the plan: 13 have already been achieved, 12 are 'in progress' and 8 are yet to start. This Action Plan builds on the major successes of the 1998 Countryside Recreation Strategy and the subsequent work of Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland (ORNI) - formally CAAN. The approach to promoting and developing outdoor recreation in Northern Ireland is cross cutting and the work of ORNI is funded by four Government departments. This is not a standalone strategy but something which binds together stakeholders and creates a clear joint pathway for future development of the sector.

3.1.4 Success factors / challenges

As stated above, 25 out of 33 actions are already either completed (40%), or in progress (36%). It was estimated that additional financial resources of approximately £2.9 million would be needed from 2013 to 2020 however there is already public investment in outdoor recreation from both central and local Government - with four Government Departments investing in ORNI. The combination of the clear role and purpose articulated in a practical 'Action Plan', along with wide cross-sector collaboration (much wider than just 'sport'), has helped to drive early success in the strategy implementation.

The key elements of the Action Plan which have contributed to its success include:

- Action orientated with specific targets
- Its dynamic nature (monitored and reviewed quarterly)
- Wide partnership approach – cross-sector commitment
- Clear purpose and role
- Based on extensive consultation

- Dedicated people, with drive and commitment

3.2 The North Wales Outdoor Sector Vision and Action Plan 2009-2015 - Tourism Partnership North Wales

3.2.1 Method / process

The North Wales Outdoor Sector Vision and Action Plan was prepared for Tourism Partnership North Wales (TPNW) in 2009. TPNW was the regional tourism partnership serving North Wales and part of the National Assembly for Wales. However, following re-structuring a new regional engagement team for tourism is to be established within the Welsh Government as part of Visit Wales. It is not yet possible to determine what impact this will have on previously adopted policies and strategies.

This strategy was prepared by private consultants in partnership with Snowdonia-Active (a social enterprise and consultancy - <http://www.snowdonia-active.org>). The initial audit is very detailed and looks comprehensive. The consultants undertook an assessment of comparator destinations; consultation with industry and organisations involved in developing and promoting the outdoor sector; and an assessment of the current support infrastructure in place to develop the outdoor sector North Wales. This work was underpinned by stakeholder engagement and workshop facilitation, and face-to-face interviews to identify opportunities and prepare the action plan. A Stage 1 Report has been produced, focusing on an audit and "state of the outdoor sector" review for North Wales. A Stage 2 Report sets out a proposed vision and actions for the wider sector.

3.2.2 Structure

The focus of the work undertaken for the plan was threefold:

- A market review and assessment of the outdoor activity sector;
- Preparation of a refreshed and challenging vision for the outdoor sector in North Wales; and
- Development of a deliverable Action Plan for the sector, focusing on
 - a. Product development
 - b. Promotion and marketing, and
 - c. People development.

The report recognises the cross-cutting nature of outdoor recreation, noting impacts on policy areas such as health and wellbeing; education and lifelong learning; competitive sport; culture and heritage; and tourism, economic development and employment (including enterprise and skills training).

Following this very detailed audit, the Stage 2 Report proposes a `vision` for the outdoor sector in North Wales, accompanied by six strategic objectives.

"North Wales will be an inspirational example of the sustainable development of the active outdoors. Partners and communities will work together to sustain, support, enhance and promote the unique natural environment and assets in North Wales as a key feature of peoples' lives"

It is notable that the six objectives are very focused on the wider outdoor recreation sector - particularly the broad commercial providers, often small scale and fragmented. The report also notes a previous lack of government support to this area and gaps in strategic policies.

This strategy is not really in a position to set out detailed delivery targets. Therefore the implementation or action plan section is necessarily an over-arching statement. But some specific proposals are made, with an emphasis on a co-ordinated approach, and commitment and investment from public, private and voluntary sectors. There includes a proposal to develop some sort of strategic

(and resourced) outdoor sector network to develop the wider sector, raise awareness of outdoor recreation and encourage participation. Continuing consultation with key stakeholders is seen as key to engagement, along with commitment from the North Wales Economic Forum (or its successor bodies). Additional proposals are made but all of these are purely speculative at this point.

3.2.3 Rationale for inclusion

The strategy was developed via a comprehensive process and the plan is based on a detailed analysis of existing provision and wide stakeholder consultation.

3.2.4 Successes / challenges

Due to the changing organisational structures in Wales following the production of this report, it is difficult to evaluate successes arising from this report alone. The Wales Activity Tourism Organisation (<http://www.wato.org.uk>) was established in April 2009 and is sponsored by Visit Wales who provide secretariat services and funding to help deliver the agreed annual work plans. WATO has subsequently campaigned for the development of a Wales Outdoor Recreation Network to bring all the key stakeholders involved in the development of outdoor recreation together nationally, whilst continuing to recognise the value of existing regional groups to maintain strong working relationships with outdoor recreation businesses. WATO continues to seek resources from the Welsh Government to support this initiative.

The Welsh Government has drawn many of the previous public agencies in this field back into its central government departments. The Tourism, Heritage & Sport section now sits within the Economy, Skills & Natural Resources Group, and in 2014 they commissioned research in partnership with the Welsh Activity Tourism Organisation to establish the value of outdoor activity tourism to Wales. The current situation of rapid change makes it difficult to evaluate strategy impacts however it is reassuring to see that outdoor recreation and adventure tourism remain a priority in North Wales.

Success factors:

- An extremely detailed audit of existing facilities, infrastructure and opportunities.
- Wide consultation with both larger organisations and representatives of the commercial sector.
- Raising the profile of outdoor activity within the larger national agenda.

Challenges still faced:

- Lack of clarity around current status due to organisational change and new funding priorities.
- Lack of clarity around who is now responsible for taking these proposals forward.
- The complexity of the interface between simple, strategic and national policies, and a diverse and sometimes fragmented industry sector.

3.3 New Zealand National Outdoor Recreation Plan

3.3.1 Method / process

In 2006 the outdoor recreation sector indicated to Government that a review of the sector was needed. The sector was described as 'rudderless', fragmented and under-valued, and as such, limiting its potential to improve individual, community, environmental, economic and national outcomes.

In 2007 the Minister for Sport and Recreation and the Minister of Conservation agreed to undertake a sector review to initiate the development of a sector-wide strategic framework. Subsequently relevant research and consultation was undertaken with key stakeholders in 2007 and 2008. Improved coordination, collaboration, capacity and capability were considered necessary to enable the sector to meet the current and future challenges in a way that maximised opportunities, benefits, investment and resources. Stakeholders considered that government had a key role to play in developing a strategic framework for recreation, particularly as no agency was responsible for the promotion of outdoor recreation across government or throughout the whole sector. The lack of a framework in the sector was seen as a contributing factor in the sector's limited ability to effectively advocate for outdoor recreation both within government and elsewhere.

There was a strategy published in 2009 to provide a vision for the sector. An Outdoor Recreation Research Agenda was also developed to support this strategy. The Research Agenda was based on information identified through a research stocktake and synthesis report. The Agenda is a collaborative plan to address *strategic* research topics and issues that will contribute towards achieving the goals of the Outdoor Recreation Strategy. The Agenda aims to improve coordination and collaboration of outdoor recreation research by identifying and focusing on major knowledge gaps, issues and priorities. Sport and Recreation New Zealand (SPARC) developed the Agenda with help from a Working Group that included representatives from the Department of Conservation (DOC), the Sir Edmund Hillary Outdoor Recreation Council (the Council), the Ministry of Economic Development (Tourism Strategy Group), the Mountain Safety Council and Water Safety New Zealand. The Agenda content also was informed by the Outdoor Recreation Research Stocktake (completed in August 2010) and an on-line forum. The draft Agenda was peer-reviewed. A broader Active Recreation Strategy is also under development, which will incorporate an outdoor recreation component.

3.3.2 Structure

The Outdoor Recreation strategy (2009-2015) is a 16-page document focused on the central vision: "New Zealanders participate regularly in outdoor recreation because they understand and value its contribution to their quality of life" by 2015. The strategy contains one long-term outcome: "to increase the number of people who participate regularly in outdoor recreation activities" and three intermediate outcomes:

- A more capable and effective delivery system for outdoor recreation
- Access to natural areas that support the full spectrum of outdoor recreation opportunities
- More New Zealanders with the skills and knowledge to participate in outdoor recreation

Within the three outcomes, there are nine priority focus areas: governance and leadership, sector coordination and capability, research, smart investment, managing access, coordinated planning, protection of natural resources, youth participation, and coordinating learning and development.

There are 14 outputs specified and the strategy includes a description of issues and priorities. There is a success measure for 2015 of a 2% increase in participation in outdoor recreation activities as measured by Active New Zealand survey, along with details of how this will be measured.

2.3.3 Rationale for inclusion

Sport New Zealand undertook a review of their Outdoor Recreation sector eight years ago. They commissioned a stocktake and research synthesis, followed by the development of a Research Agenda to enhance coordination and to address evidence gaps that would support strategic development. The 2009-2015 strategy is currently up for review.

2.3.4 Successes / challenges

A high priority has been placed on evidence-based delivery and substantial research has been assessed and undertaken to understand the position. The strategy and its accompanying research agenda formed a comprehensive plan which showed clear intention to drive the sector forward. Wide cross-sector engagement was also achieved and extensive research was used to underpin the strategy.

However Sport NZ has recently undergone major structural changes. It is unlikely that there will be another outdoor recreation strategy, as this will be brought into the broader Active Recreation Strategy which is currently under development. There was no formal review of the impact/success of the original strategy 2009-2015. Some of this might be picked up through the broader active recreation strategy development (to be determined). There is no clear documented evidence to show the impact of the strategy and it would appear that things are currently 'in limbo' awaiting the development of a new strategy. Despite direct communication with Sport NZ no further clarification could be obtained.

3.4 *A More Active Scotland: Building a Legacy from the Commonwealth Games*

3.4.1 Method / process

The 2014 'More Active Scotland' strategy was designed to address the challenge of physical inactivity by building on the legacy from the Commonwealth Games. The strategy aims to achieve the vision that "the people of Scotland will enjoy more active and healthier lives". The strategy is aligned to the Toronto Charter which was launched in 2010 as an international 'call to action'.

The strategy will be managed by a programme board of senior leaders from across the five delivery themes, reporting into a National Strategic Group chaired by the Minister for Commonwealth Games and Sport.

3.4.2 Structure

The strategy sets out five core delivery themes with short-term targets to be achieved by the end of 2014, along with a series of five-year and ten-year aims within each theme. The aims are a combination of specific outputs and broader outcomes. The themes are: environment, workplace settings, health and social care, education settings, sport and active recreation - plus a series of communication aims.

3.4.3 Rationale

In 2003 Scotland was one of the first countries to introduce a national physical activity strategy. This was a 20-year strategy, reviewed after five years and approved as fit for purpose

<http://www.healthscotland.com/uploads/documents/1150-HS%20PA%205yr%20Review%20Final.pdf>. The strategy has been developed in partnership with national agencies (e.g. NHS Health Scotland) and incorporates key elements of the Toronto Charter.

Further development and the tracking of outcomes for sport and physical activity is currently underway <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/ArtsCultureSport/Sport/Outcomes-Framework>.

3.4.4 Successes / challenges

A More Active Scotland is a recently published strategy and as such it is too early to assess its success or otherwise. However the 2003 strategy has been formally reviewed. This review found that the existence of a national strategy and the national co-ordinator's role was influential in supporting cross-sector working with sectors such as education, transport and environment. At local level, 29 out of the 32 local authority regions had local physical activity strategies in place, however there was limited evidence from the review that the national level commitment to physical activity and regional strategy development had led to an increased priority to physical activity within mainstream services and sectors. The key conclusion from the review was:

"To ensure that national strategies have an impact on population health, policy implementation must be matched by sufficient political will and resource, both locally and nationally. Ensuring a greater focus for interventions on the wider environmental determinants of physical activity is not only important in addressing inequalities by reaching whole populations but also provides physical activity advocates with an opportunity to develop powerful coalitions with non-health sectors".

3.5 VisitEngland Tourism Strategy

3.5.1 Method / process

Despite having a visitor economy worth £97 billion a year and employing over two million people, England was without a dedicated tourism board from 2003 until VisitEngland was established in 2009. In 2010 a Strategic Framework for Tourism (2010-2020) was launched to set out the ways in which the industry can work together to achieve a 5% growth in value, year on year, for the next decade. This is a 'collaborative strategy' for England's tourism industry, and is described as the product of extensive consultation with ambitious growth targets. The strategy is set to include a realistic appraisal of England's strengths and weaknesses, and an achievable timescale for the work required. The strategy is said to provide a platform from which the stated objectives can be constantly reviewed to address new challenges, new opportunities and changing priorities - accompanying action plans will also be reviewed and reported on an annual basis. The Strategic Framework is said to provide the mechanism for collaborative working across the tourism industry to achieve shared objectives.

The framework and the programmes within it will adapt and evolve over time in response to changes in organisational structures, budgets, partners and as activity takes shape. "Successful delivery is dependent on a dynamic partnership across the industry that places a strong emphasis on effective engagement and communication at national, regional, sub-regional and local level, identifying opportunities for economies of scale".

3.5.2 Structure

The strategy document is structured into three key sections and a summary. There are four interdependent objectives:

1. To increase England's share of global visitor markets
2. To offer visitors compelling destinations of distinction
3. To champion a successful, thriving, tourism industry
4. To facilitate greater engagement between the visitor and the experience

Additionally, in 2011 ten industry action plans were developed by cross industry groups to implement the actions needed to achieve the objectives, followed by a further three in 2012. These plans set out the actions <https://www.visitengland.com/biz/tourism-england/strategic-framework-tourism-england/industry-action-plans>

3.5.3 Rationale for inclusion

This is a dynamic strategy, reviewed on an annual basis and with 13 individual action plans that are continually updated (an initial ten 'phase 1' and then a further three in 2012). In addition to this, the 'Strategic Framework' provides an over-arching business case and vision for development that combines realism and ambition.

3.5.4 Successes / challenges

There are a range of success factors that stand out from this strategy. Firstly its format is flexible and enables the strategy to adapt to changing circumstances. The industry plans set clear goals and areas of responsibility, specifying outcome / success measures to be tracked. The whole of the strategic approach is carefully monitored and progress is tracked and reported in a transparent way:

- Adaptable
- Ambitious targets
- Clear industry focused action plans
- Collaborative approach
- Good visuals

The complete set of strategy documents (the strategy / vision document plus 13 individual plans) is very comprehensive however as it is split by area is it possible for people to pick and choose the parts most relevant to them. There is a lot of documentation however so getting a clear overview could be time consuming.

VisitEngland has monitored the delivery of the Action Plans, driving action forward with a core group of industry trade associations and experts – the Strategic Industry Advisory Group. Since the Strategic Framework was developed, and the Action Plans launched, there have been a number of fundamental changes to the tourism delivery landscape. These changes have impacted on the ability of partners to deliver on their actions in the strategy.

There are now 152 actions identified across the set of Action Plans. Seven actions across these plans have been amalgamated or removed to avoid duplication with other activity. 67% of actions are complete and 16% are progressing across phase 1 Action Plans. This means that 83% of activity is either underway or complete. 18 actions have not been delivered and this is due to the challenge of constrained resources of partners and businesses. For phase 2, 46 actions were identified. 76% of these actions are progressing (50%) or complete (26%). This is positive progress for three challenging areas of the Strategic Framework.

3.6 Peak District National Park Authority - ACTIVE IN THE OUTDOORS - A Recreation Strategy and Action Plan for the Peak District National Park - 2010-2020

3.6.1 Method / process

This document is described as an 'Action Plan' as well as a strategy. It was produced by the Peak District National Park Authority (PDNPA) to add detail to their over-arching National Park Management Plan; specifically the management plan outcome that *"by 2011 all people, especially those from disadvantaged communities, children and young people, and the elderly should:*

- *feel welcome in the National Park;*
- *have the opportunity to participate in diverse recreational activities that enhance the quality of their lives."*

The strategy was developed over several years, and followed increasing emphasis on the implementation of national parks' second statutory purpose "to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of those areas by the public" (as defined by the 1995 Environment Act) by the government and its relevant agencies (including research and guidelines produced at SHU - see Crowe, 2005) in the early 2000s.

An extensive consultation process occurred with a wide range of stakeholders and partners. A stakeholder workshop was held in 2008 to reflect on existing recreation opportunities and areas for improvement, and a large data gathering exercise mapped recreation facilities and sites against other national park characteristics. Further consultation took place at a community level through the park's Parish Forum and with the Park's constituent local authorities.

In September 2009, a Draft Recreation Strategy was circulated to a wide range of stakeholders and posted on the National Park Authority website. The consultation sought views on the main themes and headline actions generating a wealth of constructive comment which is reflected in the final Strategy, published in April 2010.

The strategy is monitored and reviewed through three bodies - a PDNPA Recreation Strategy internal officer group; a Recreation Strategy Steering Group (involving a representative range of statutory consultees such as constituent local authorities, government agencies and the Local Access Forum); and an annual Recreation Forum meeting, often involving 40-50 external stakeholders. This latter meeting helps to raise awareness and discuss achievements during the previous year and proposals for the forthcoming year, as well as seek new ideas and partner roles.

3.6.2 Structure

The plan provides a strategic framework for the provision of recreation opportunities over the next 10 years. Each theme has an overall aim and an outcome. This latter statement is particularly good practice, as it effectively addresses the issue 'what will success look like', rather than just advocating a more generalised aim. Alongside these aims and outcomes are a realistic number of specific actions.

The National Park Authority (NPA) does not view itself as the main delivery agent, but anticipates that others will also assist in achieving the plans aims. So, alongside the main strategy, there is a detailed implementation plan which considers each proposed aim and outcome against key indicators; baseline data; final target; and measure. The implementation plan then provides further detail against the headline actions, including the key partners involved in delivery; the PDNPA's own role; milestones; and a timescale to completion of the action.

The strategy was for established for 10 years and is still available on the PDNPA web site - so presumably is still considered active. However, in 2013 a new "Recreation Strategy Action Plan" was produced by the PDNPA apparently for the period 2013-15. This is a much slimmer document, with only three specific themes highlighted:

- Healthy lifestyles
- Widening participation
- Less impact

It is worth noting that the issue of potential conflicts between recreation and conservation has risen up the agenda again, and that the detailed delivery plans and timescales are less explicit than in the 2010 version. There have been several high profile cases around motorised recreation which may have contributed to the former, and a huge reduction in NPA's overall budget allocation from the national government which may have contributed to the latter. This raises the issue of the difficulties inherent in long-term strategies in challenging times financially, and when political changes inevitably influence overall policy direction.

3.6.3 Rationale for inclusion

The 2010/2020 Strategy was notable as one of the first national park plans to pro-actively promote recreation opportunities within a protected landscape (whilst ensuring the special qualities of the park are also conserved and enhanced). This was something of a milestone in the national parks movement.

The structure of the 2010/2020 Strategy was also exemplary - including SMART aims and outcomes, alongside a detailed delivery plan. The partnership approach used by the PDNPA to develop the plan, and to continue to monitor and review the plan, was also exemplary.

The continuing evolution of this strategy - both in content and approach - reflects the challenges faced by any local authority to deal with both budget cuts and changes in political direction. The PDNPA is responding with a greater focus on commercial ventures and initiatives which particularly generate tourism spend, whilst attempting to justify wider improvements through health and equity benefits, as well as general contributions to economic development in this rural area.

3.6.4 Successes / challenges

A recent report provided by the PDNPA Recreation Strategy Officer to the Local Access Forum states that the 2013/15 Action Plan is currently being updated for 2015/16. The report also includes a series of significant achievements, summarised below:

- There has been significant investment in cycling trails and facilities, and promoting cycling participation, utilising substantial government grants. As well as cycle track expansion, there has also been consideration of further developments aimed at mountain biking.
- Improved infrastructure also includes work on canal towpaths, and ongoing work through various estate management plans.
- Considerable improvements in the use of social media, branding and visitor materials to enhance participation and improve confidence and capabilities across all outdoor activities.
- The development and implementation of a series of action plans to manage recreational motor vehicles in sensitive locations (including the implementation of some restrictions in the worst affected areas).
- Ongoing work to develop and enhance open access land and public rights of way.
- A sustainable travel summit has been held generating ideas and commitment, with the intention to develop a plan of action to capitalise on the high level of engagement from all those who attended the event, including the Secretary of State for transport.

Success factors:

- Wide partnership approach - cross sector commitment
- Clear aims and outcomes
- Detailed delivery plan, with measurable targets and clear timetable
- Dedicated people, with drive and commitment.

Challenges still faced:

- Changing political direction, both in overall strategy terms and in some detailed policy areas.
- Changing funding regimes, therefore available resources unclear.
- A lack of clarity over which 'Recreation Strategy and Action Plan' is actually current.

3.7 *Portland Parks and Recreation: Strategic Plan 2012-15*

3.7.1 Method / process

Not specified.

3.7.2 Structure

The Strategic Plan is organised into two "mission-focused" Key Result Areas (KRA) and four perspectives of a balanced score card (considering: community, process, financial and organisational capacity). Each KRA contains three strategic themes:

KRA 1: Manage and Protect Assets

- Trails
- Asset management
- Sustainability

KRA 2: Improve Service Delivery

- Health
- Recreation Programs
- Access and Equity

Each of the strategic themes above (e.g. health) has one or two outcome-orientated goals and a series of 'initiatives'. The core of the strategic plan is the set of 28 initiatives (specific actions) each assigned with a Project Manager, clear 'performance measures' and 'action items' are stated for each. The presentation of the report is predominantly lists of text with some exemplar photographs.

3.7.3 Rationale for inclusion

Portland has been highlighted as an international example of good practice in terms of outdoor recreation, particularly with reference to developing the region's outdoor economy. Portland Parks and Recreation was recognised as the best managed park system in the USA and awarded their gold medal in 2011. Consideration of this strategy which is focused on parks and recreation only was undertaken to provide a different perspective and an international comparator.

3.7.4 Successes / challenges

There is no available information.

3.8 Forests for People - Access, Recreation & Tourism - Forestry Commission for Scotland

3.8.1 Method / process

This strategy is aimed at recreation taking place in sustainably managed multi-functional forests - specifically the Scottish public forest estate. This is the basis for engaging with stakeholders nationally, whilst individual design plans for each forest shows recreation, tourism and local access opportunities. As such, this is more of an over-arching strategic vision, rather than a detailed action plan.

The strategy document lays out a framework of national priorities for the management of access, recreation and tourism infrastructure for the next 10 years. It details what the Forestry Commission for Scotland intends to do to meet new circumstances, to modernise and to reach new audiences. Recreation is not seen as an end in itself. This framework shows how they will manage recreation, access and tourism on the national forest estate so that it helps to deliver the Scottish Government's social, economic and environmental objectives, as set out in the Scottish Forestry Strategy. It sets the context for implementing recommendations from the review of the national forest estate and for developing activity-specific and local strategies.

The strategy states that success will be measured not simply by total numbers of visitors, but by delivery of changes in the real world, with a key focus on economic benefits, health improvements, quality of life and regeneration.

"Access, recreation and tourism on the national forest estate, and management of it, will have a strong and established reputation for deriving quality and value for money public benefits. The provision will be widely regarded as a model of best practice and a core part of sustainable forest management".

3.8.2 Structure

The strategy's priorities are exemplified through some very detailed case studies, to provide examples of best practice. Although there is not a detailed action plan, further consideration around implementation, monitoring and evaluation is considered briefly. The document states that implementation planning will be a key part of delivering this framework. They plan to:

- Develop an implementation plan by the end of 2008 with additional guidance for staff. This will include a planned approach to evaluation that clearly identifies the desired outcomes of recreation provision, establishes the baseline situation and monitors progress towards the desired outcomes.
- Develop a suite of simple indicators of outcomes with associated standard assessment methodologies.
- Undertake more detailed case studies in a representative selection of projects.
- Build understanding of what works best in terms of delivery of outcomes, to inform further decision making, operational guidance and performance assessments.
- Share the results of findings with partners and businesses.

3.8.3 Rationale for inclusion

This is a good example of a visually interesting strategy with a broad focus on development from an economic and social perspective.

3.8.4 Successes / challenges

Difficult to evaluate if there has been much progress achieved, as not much is cited in the public domain. Good practice is shown in the very good use of case studies and practical examples to illustrate their priorities and focus. It is also noticeable the extent to which economic development, employment opportunities and regeneration of local communities are main priorities of this strategy.

3.9 Additional documents considered / consulted:

Countryside Access Strategy for Shropshire 2008-2018 - nominated for a Natural England Rights of Way Improvement Plan Award for the "best consultation / community involvement award". Self-reviewed in 2014.

Scotland The Perfect Stage. A Strategy for the Events Industry in Scotland 2009-2020. Ambitious strategy reported to be moving at an 'incredible pace'. Sets out a vision for securing and staging events. Dovetails to the wider tourism industry strategy. Good design, 24 pages.

South East Queensland Outdoor Recreation Strategy 2010 – 5-page strategy, high-quality design, eight priority actions, concise overview to evidence the rationale and show intent.

4. Concluding comments / recommendations

This concluding section provides a summary of the key success factors and challenges identified during this review process, and highlights a series of recommendations. It also includes some detail on the Toronto Charter for Physical Activity which is a useful source to consider in relation to strategy development.

4.1 Challenges

- Promoting a national vision but with local relevance and engagement.
- How to engage and support the fragmented aspects of the outdoor recreation industry?
- Achieving sufficient stakeholder involvement and consultation.
- Connectivity between national strategies.
- Resource limitations.

There are many examples of good strategies that have not achieved success due to significant political / contextual changes which prevent the strategy from being current or relevant, or which change the infrastructure or resources required to achieve successful implementation. A strategy needs to set out a mechanism for change that is responsive, not only reacting to emerging challenges (such as political changes and structural changes) but also ensuring that through adopting a flexible approach any opportunities presented can be capitalised on and used to positively influence the strategy.

The outdoor recreation industry is somewhat fragmented and it is therefore a challenge to ensure that all interests are represented and promoted. Some of the strategies reviewed did not incorporate sufficient recognition of the need to involve commercial operators or adequate consideration of the outdoor economy and how this could be grown. An increase in participation in outdoor recreation would have significant cross-sector benefits and as such it is necessary to ensure that all key agencies are involved.

It is inherently difficult to drive forward a long-term strategy in times of financial austerity and during political change which results in changes in policy direction. There is a need to promote collaboration, coordination and wide engagement to ensure full support for the strategy. Effective promotion of early successes in strategy implementation would be valuable to maintaining and potentially enhancing engagement.

4.2 The Toronto Charter

In 2010 the Toronto Charter for Physical Activity was launched. The Charter is a 'call for action' and a 'gold standard' advocacy tool to create sustainable opportunities for physically active lifestyles for all, developed with extensive worldwide consultation. The Charter called for concerted action across four key areas, bringing together governments, civil society, academic institutions, professional associations, the private sector, and other organisations within and outside the health sector, as well as communities themselves.

The first of these four areas is the implementation of a national policy and action plan - the key recommendations for the suggested approach are highlighted below. In addition to this, the Charter called for: the introduction of policies that support physical activity, the reorientation of services and funding to prioritise physical activity and the development of partnerships for action.

A national policy and action plan is reported to provide direction, support and coordination of the many sectors involved. It also assists in focusing resources as well as providing accountability. A

national policy and action plan is a significant indicator of political commitment. The guidance provided by the Toronto Charter is that policy and action plans should:

- Gain input from a broad constituency of relevant stakeholders;
- Identify clear leadership for physical activity, which may come from any government sector, other relevant non-government agencies or from cross sector collaboration;
- Describe the roles and actions that government, not-for-profit, volunteer and private sector Organizations at national, regional and local levels should take to implement the plan and promote physical activity;
- Provide an implementation plan that defines accountability, timelines and funding;
- Include combinations of different strategies to influence individual, social, cultural and built environment factors that will inform, motivate and support individuals and communities to be active, in ways that are safe and enjoyable;
- Adopt evidence based guidelines on physical activity and health.

4.3 Summary of recommendations

- **Partnerships and consultation:**
A strategy should be co-produced with plentiful consultation and input from key stakeholders, particularly from those who engage with the groups we are trying hardest to reach. Stakeholders should feel a sense of ownership of the strategy. There should be attempts to engage and to facilitate input from the public.
- **Style and format:**
The language of the strategy should be carefully considered. It should be conversational and positive in tone so it is easy to read. The content should be factual but presented in an engaging way. The messages should be concise and simple. There should be different options for different readers - this could be as simple as a summary box for every section / page or an exec summary version. The style should be highly visual to attract and hold attention.
- **Action driven:**
The strategy should be action orientated. It may take shape as an action plan or framework rather than a traditional strategy - or as an over-arching vision with an operational plan. It needs to be tangible with a clear (flexible) delivery plan so it is easy to see how the ambitions will be taken forward.
- **Adaptable:**
Whilst the overall vision can be a clear, long-term aim, the detail of how to achieve this must be flexible and be able to respond and adapt to change.
- **Utilising existing expertise:**
Both local and national data, policies and evidence should be pulled together to inform the projects / ambitions. Expert input / a peer review process should be utilised as needed to ensure an independent perspective and specialist expertise is incorporated.

Whilst appreciating the need to capitalise on current momentum and enthusiasm and to get a strategy launched as soon as possible, it is essential that the process is undertaken in the right way to increase the chances of successful implementation. Once the key objective and purpose of the initial 'strategy' is agreed then it may be possible to publish a 'vision' with further detail underpinning the strategy and how it will be implemented and achieved following thereafter.

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National Outdoor Recreation Strategy : preliminary review of strategies

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