

## HEALTH, WELLBEING AND DIVERSITY

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### Summary

This paper provides some information for discussion about development of work in the Shropshire Hills AONB on health, wellbeing and diversity.

### Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to note and comment on the information provided.

### Background

The health and wellbeing benefits to people of outdoor activity and contact with nature has long been acknowledged in relation to the Shropshire Hills AONB and activity of partners. The Glover Review requires us to pay even greater attention to this in future, and to take active steps to ensure these benefits are enjoyed by a broader cross-section of society.

For projects led by the AONB Partnership, health and wellbeing has often been a secondary benefit from activities with a primary focus on conservation (such as volunteering within our Rivers project work and the Landscape Partnership Scheme) or awareness-raising (such as through the John Muri Award activity). This is fine, and the spin-off benefits are welcome, but designing projects and activities with health and wellbeing uppermost obviously has the potential to achieve more with these benefits, and to target them to those most in need. Some examples of projects with health and wellbeing benefits as the primary aim, operating in the Shropshire Hills AONB through partners, and from other AONBs, include:

Shropshire Wild Teams – Shropshire Council. Outdoor practical volunteering for adults with learning disabilities and mental health difficulties.

<http://www.shropshiresgreatoutdoors.co.uk/volunteering-outdoors/wild-team-leaders/>

Growing Confidence – Shropshire Wildlife Trust. Engaging 11-24s with nature.

<https://www.shropshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/growing-confidence>

Stepping into Nature – Dorset AONB. Outdoor trips and activities for people with dementia.

<https://www.dorsetaonb.org.uk/project/stepping-into-nature/>

As with many topics, the role of the AONB team as a direct provider is just one mechanism, of modest scale. While we do want to identify ways to improve and expand this, the collective activity of partners within the AONB Partnership, and the ability of the Partnership to influence and co-ordinate the activities of others, are also very significant.

We are developing youth engagement work with the South Shropshire Youth Forum, and discussing possibilities for greater engagement with visitors from BAME backgrounds in conjunction with the National Trust at Cardingmill Valley and with Telford & Wrekin Council. We are also in discussion with Public Health colleagues within Shropshire Council.

Information on current activity in the areas of health, wellbeing and diversity by organisations within the Partnership will be welcomed from members, along with ideas for development of further work and collaboration.

The rapidly evolving Coronavirus situation will affect activities in the coming months, but does also highlight the huge value to people of outdoor physical exercise and contact with nature, as highlighted in the current MIND advice on mental health and wellbeing <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>.

The Glover review recommendations on this topic are reproduced here for reference:

*Landscapes for everyone*

*Our national landscapes should be alive for people, places where everyone is actively welcomed in and there are unrivalled opportunities to enjoy their natural beauty and all it offers: landscapes for all. We need:*

- *England's national landscapes to reach out and actively connect all parts of society with these special places to support the nation's health and wellbeing. Their legal purposes should be explicit about this, and the same purpose applied to AONBs as to National Parks.*
- *National landscapes must develop ambitious, targeted plans for helping those who currently fail to benefit from our most special places to do so, and be held to account for delivery. This must include excellent, but currently local, examples being established everywhere. The National Landscapes Service should have a key role in spreading these best practices and holding bodies to account for delivery.*
- *Ambitious programmes should include, but not be limited to:*
  - *children and young people;*
  - *Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities;*
  - *people with health conditions and disabilities;*
  - *volunteering.*
- *A truly warm and helpful welcome, wherever you want to go – better signs, information and websites are needed, and critically, a National Landscapes Ranger Service.*
- *Our national landscapes must become our most welcoming and easily accessible places. Here, more than anywhere else, people can get out into nature and enjoy it. This means joining up with others to make the most of what is already there, but also asking ourselves whether they could be more accessible than they are now.*

**List of Background Papers**

This video of the presentation on 'The role of nature on mental health and wellbeing' by Dr William Bird at the Europarc 2019 Conference is highly recommended:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fUrXoXutd8U&feature=youtu.be>

**Human Rights Act Appraisal**

The information in this report is compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998.

**Environmental Appraisal**

The recommendation in this paper will contribute to the conservation of protected landscapes.

**Risk Management Appraisal**

Risk management has been appraised as part of the considerations of this report.

**Community / Consultations Appraisal**

The topics raised in this paper have been the subject of earlier consultations with Partnership members.

**Appendices**

Appendix 1 Extracts from Europarc Federation Jurmala Communiqué 2019 on Health and Wellbeing in Protected Areas

Appendix 2 Extracts from Europarc Federation Health & Wellbeing Toolkit

Appendix 3 Extracts from Dr William Bird presentation on 'The role of nature on mental health and wellbeing'

## Appendix 1 Extracts from Europarc Federation Jurmala Communiqué 2019: Healthy Parks, Healthy People Europe

Based on the outcomes of the 2019 Conference, and with input of the Europarc Health & Protected Areas Commission, the Europarc Federation launched the Jurmala Communiqué, a first step towards the creation of the Healthy Parks, Healthy People initiative Europe.

We firmly believe that our parks and Protected Areas are a health-promoting asset. They have a crucial role in nurturing healthy ecosystems that sustain our societies, and the conference has given us the opportunity to analyse these roles, needs and opportunities in detail.

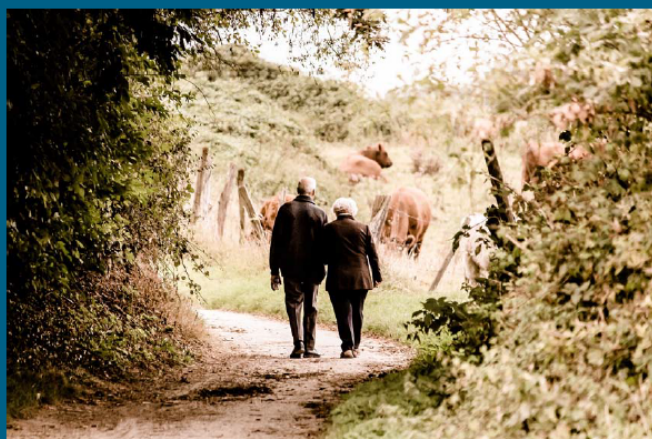
To assure Protected Areas are recognised by the opportunities they provide for people to experience and enjoy nature, and the contribution to the mental, physical, social and spiritual health and well-being of people and communities across Europe, EUROPARC will further develop the Healthy Parks Healthy People (HPPH) Europe. The HPPH programme will support EUROPARC members to develop policy, practice and partnerships in order to build stronger relations with the health sector.



These fundamental connections between human health and environmental health have inspired the development of the “Healthy Parks Healthy People” programme – a global movement that aims “to unlock the power of nature and parks for their preventative and restorative health and well-being benefits while conserving and restoring biodiversity”. Common elements of the approach are:

- increasing recognition and priority in relevant policy frameworks of the role that outdoor recreation, play, learning and volunteering activity which promotes positive contact with nature can play in supporting physical, mental and social health;
- ensuring that local communities, and people and groups of all ages and backgrounds, can access parks and Protected Areas and can use and enjoy them responsibly;
- enhancing existing or establishing new programmes for promoting healthy lifestyles and delivering health outcomes through contact with nature in parks and Protected Areas;
- developing new partnership with local and national health partners and other sectors to maximise health and environmental benefits; and
- investing in visitor infrastructure to allow for increased use alongside nature protection and enhancement;
- promoting the contribution that parks and Protected Areas can make to improving health and supporting local and regional economies.

The concept was developed by Parks Victoria which organised the 1st HPHP conference in Melbourne in April 2010. It was then quickly taken up by other nations, including the US and Canadian, Finnish and Korean Park Services which have developed nation-wide programmes to deliver it. EUROPARC Federation signed up to the Melbourne Communiqué and has promoted this agenda through the work of its Health and Protected Areas Commission, including most notably the toolkit and a series of well attended webinars and seminars. EUROPARC members from Scotland and Finland are also on the current Health and Well-being specialist group established by IUCN to take forward this work on health-related nature-based solutions as part of its broader “Nature for all” programme.



The EUROPARC Federation vision is for “sustainable nature, valued by people” across Europe. We believe that the development and implementation of a common European approach to HPHP will help make the case for further investment and a strategic approach to parks, Protected Areas and associated green infrastructure which can deliver better outcomes for both people and nature.



**EUROPARC**  
FEDERATION

# Why should parks and Protected Areas be involved in supporting health outcomes?

The following Guiding Principles have been adopted by the EUROPARC Federation.

Positive contact with nature is important for human health. It can create well-being, **prevent public health problems and promote an active lifestyle.**

Parks & protected areas **connect people with nature** and represent a valuable natural asset that can provide specific contributions to the delivery of positive health outcomes.

Parks & protected areas contribute to **individual and community health and well-being**, and to wider aspects of **economic health and growth.**

Planning and delivery of site management to achieve health objectives should be informed by and delivered through:

## Policy

A policy framework at national, regional and / or local level that establishes the connection between the natural environment and health benefits supports management objectives

The delivery of health objectives by parks and protected areas is a natural extension of their traditional role in providing for access and recreation – it illustrates the environment sector responding to social needs and should be embedded as part of park management bodies' core business.

## Partnerships

Community engagement and cross-sector partnerships in implementation reflect joined-up working and provide wider benefits

**The importance of parks and protected areas for health promotion and improvement adds to the case for investment in these natural assets.**

## Best practice & innovation

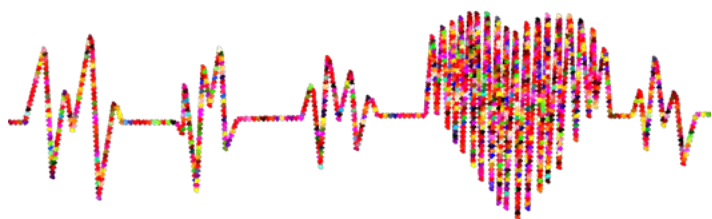
A strong evidence-base is supported by many examples of good practice, with innovative projects being shared throughout the parks & protected areas network.

These principles have been developed from the *Healthy Parks Healthy People* philosophy as set out in the Melbourne Communiqué of 2010 which has been endorsed by the EUROPARC Federation.



# Evidence

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Key benefits include:

**better physical and mental health  
and guarding against future illness;  
therapeutic and restorative qualities  
which enhance recovery;  
reduced social isolation and greater  
community cohesion;  
and opportunities to establish  
lifelong healthy behaviours.**

## References

- [NHS Forest – evidence summary](#) of health, social, environmental and financial benefits
- [Evidence statement on the links between natural environments and human health 2017](#) DEFRA and University of Exeter
- [A Dose of Nature: addressing chronic health conditions by using the environment](#). 2014 University of Exeter
- [The Great Outdoors: how a green exercise environment can benefit all](#). 2013 Gladwell et al
- [Benefits of connecting children with greenspace](#) – range of evidence
- [Nature-based integration Nordic experiences and examples](#). 2017 Pitkänen et al
- [Natural outdoor environments and mental and physical health: Relationships and mechanisms](#). 2015 Triguero et al

There is a significant evidence base for the range of individual and wider social health and well-being benefits that can be achieved through outdoor activity and contact with nature.

- The evidence suggests that **people are more likely to maintain regular physical activity in the outdoors** – the attractive and changing surroundings aid motivation and it provides opportunities for social contact.
- One in four adults will experience mental health problems at some point in their lives. **Outdoor activity and contact with nature can help sleep patterns, reduce stress, improve mood and self-esteem, provide meaningful social contact.**
- The number of people with dementia is growing rapidly. Spending time in the outdoors can bring a range of benefits to people living with dementia and their carers.
- A range of health benefits for young people, including better motor skills for children who play in green spaces; reduced symptoms of ADHD with contact with green spaces; more likelihood of physically active young people in greener and more walkable neighbourhoods.
- **Experience of the natural environment by young people can be life changing in terms of confidence**, and skills that can enhance job opportunities. Encouraging interest in the natural world and outdoor activity early in life instils confidence in using natural settings and has a positive role in supporting more active, healthier lifestyles in adult life.
- The natural environment is associated with opportunities to make social contact, increase inter-generational connections, avoid isolation and enhance community cohesion. Experience of the outdoors and involvement in its care can lead to stronger more inclusive and sustainable communities.

**Physical and mental health are inter-related**, and in many ways, inter-dependent. With an ageing population and more people with multiple health issues, the breadth of benefits offered from green exercise make it a useful tool for the health sector.

**Re-connecting with the environment** through green exercise can help patients, their carers, and the general population in terms of healthy lifestyles and prevention of poor health / illness.

# Visiting the outdoors

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## can help address issues of poor health and health inequalities

Visiting the outdoors, whether it's urban greenspace close to home, countryside around towns or remote and wild areas of land and water, can help deliver a range of health benefits and can contribute to the attainment of national targets for physical activity.

**A brisk 30 minute walk on five days of the week can reduce the risk of:**

**Heart attack and stroke by 20-30%;**

**Diabetes by 30-40%;**

**Hip fractures by 36-68%;**

**Bowel cancer by 30%;**

**Breast cancer by 20%;**

**Depression/dementia by 30%**

*(from the Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer 2011 'transforming Scotland's Health, NHS Scotland)*



**Encouraging more people to visit the outdoors more frequently would help spread the benefits as widely as possible.**

- There is a **significant relationship between self-reported stress and the proportion of greenspace** in the local area (*Ward Thompson et al, 2012*)
- **Health disparities between high income and low income groups are much narrower in areas with ample greenspace** (*2012 Scottish Health Survey*)
- People living near green space experience less health complaints and better mental and physical health than those living in an urban environment. **For every 10% increase in green space there was a reduction in health complaints equivalent to a reduction of 5 years of age** (*de Vries S, Verheij R A and Groenewegen P P, 2001*)
- People living close to greenspace are more likely to meet physical activity guidelines and less likely to be overweight or obese. (*The relationship of physical activity and overweight to objectively measured greenspace accessibility and use, Coombes, 2011*)
- Nature provides an added value to the known benefits of physical activity. **Repeated exercise in nature is connected to better emotional well-being.** (*The Relationship between Perceived Health and Physical Activity Indoors, Outdoors in Built Environments, and Outdoors in Nature Pasanen, Tyrväinen & Korpela, 2014*)

## Case studies

- **Wandering in the woods - enabling people living with dementia to benefit from visiting woodlands**

The evidence gathered throughout the project implementation has shown that there are significant potential physical, social and emotional benefits for people living with dementia in case settings when they can go out into woodlands.

- **Active Senior Tourism** The project began in Extremadura (Spain) and Alentejo (Portugal) and it aims at training the tourism sector in the creation of services and products for tourists over 55.
- **Natural training with tourism and healthcare professionals.** In 2017, ENRx published the brochure "Forme, nature, Bien-être" with his partners in support of a specific Natural Training and trained 20 professionals.



# Health Check-list

## Are you delivering

## a health-promoting park / Protected Area?

The Health Check-list below and in the following pages is designed to help you think about:

- how best to plan, manage and promote your sites to a wider range of people to improve their general health and well-being; and
- how to link your sites to the health sector so that people at risk of or experiencing specific illness / health conditions can be supported to make use of your sites.



### Strategic planning – is there:

- > A link between the management objectives of your site, and the national / regional / local health and well-being policy framework
- > A site management plan that engages with local health stakeholders and responds to health issues and priorities / target groups

### Outreach – does your site have:

- > Engagement with health sector, intermediary bodies and target groups to ensure activity programmes and volunteering opportunities cater for their needs
- > Outreach programmes aimed at key target groups or communities

### Monitoring & evaluation – does your site have:

- > A visitor monitoring system that gathers feedback on health benefits
- > Monitoring systems for the health benefits delivered through specific activity programmes / health interventions

### Communications – is there:

- > Active engagement with local health professionals, providing information and opportunities to experience the ways your site can support health outcomes
- > A communications plan for your site that specifies appropriate messages for health professionals and for the public / target health groups
- > Easily accessed information about the site and what it offers to a range of visitors

### Site management – does your site have:

- > Easily accessible information on the facilities provided at the site
- > A sense of welcome for visitors
- > Visitor facilities such as parking for people with disabilities; toilets
- > A range of access provision, from easy-going paths for people with health issues / disabilities, to specific equipment / furniture to promote physical activity
- > A range activity programmes delivered directly, or through green exercise providers
- > Staff who are well trained to support visitors with health issues

### Staff training

- > Do site staff have appropriate skills and confidence to work with health groups
- > Can you build wider awareness and capacity in your organisation on health

### Other opportunities – are you able to:

- > Identify local health sector partnerships and provide a place / activity programme / visual identity for green exercise referrals / sign-posting
- > Make access to information easier for health professionals and target groups to find by inputting into / establishing a central information service for a wide range of parks / protected areas

# Our factory setting is to be in a sociable group, supportive environment and have a purpose

People



Sociable

Connect

Place



Nature

Take Notice

Purpose



Autonomy

Be Active, Give  
Keep Learning





# Pathway of Ill Health



People



Place



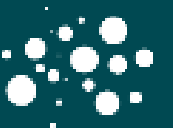
Purpose

Chronic stress

Poor health behaviours

Mitochondrial damage, telomere shortening,  
and chronic inflammation

Cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, depression



# How lack of walking impacts society



People



Place



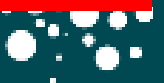
Purpose

Chronic stress

Inactivity

Poor concentration, tiredness, irritability, addiction, depression, weakness, chronic inflammation

Unsafe streets, poor air quality, reduced learning and productivity, dependence of elderly, less volunteering, isolation, obesity





# How walking invigorates society



People



Place



Purpose

Happiness

Being active

Increased confidence, greater concentration, less illness, greater contentment, better behaviour.

Increased productivity, safer streets, good air quality, stronger students, community cohesion, independence, more volunteering etc





# Summary

- We live in a stressful environment
- Isolation disconnection to nature and lack of purpose create chronic stress.
- Chronic stress causes poor health behaviour and leads to Chronic Inflammation (CI)
- CI is the “cause of causes” of most long-term conditions
- Health, diet, activity should be means to the end which is Happiness leading to greater potential and productivity.
- Its definitely walking for Happiness



# Building Active Communities

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