

New Horizons Outdoor Recreation Project

Introducing new audiences to countryside leisure and making visits relevant

Ethnic community groups in Wales often do not get enough chances to relax and have fun in the countryside. Building on their experience of working with many such groups, the *Black Environment Network (BEN)* developed a project to increase opportunities for rural recreation by coordinating a programme of countryside visits.

The New Horizons Outdoor Recreation Project was supported by a grant from Adfywio (a Welsh word meaning 'revive') which was a National Assembly for Wales scheme to help stimulate rural economic recovery following the foot and mouth outbreak. The funding was spent on services such as buses, and directly fed back to the economy. Ethnic groups are also a new audience that will become part of the countryside economy in the future.

Fostering mutual respect

The main objectives of the New Horizons project were: to nurture ethnic communities' interest in outdoor activities and stimulate their future contribution to the rural economy as countryside visitors; to enable groups to organise outdoor activities safely and with respect for the environment by providing training and support; to produce resources relevant to the needs of ethnic groups and support rural businesses, organisations and activity providers to provide for the needs of customers from ethnic groups.

Making it happen

Between July 2003 and March 2004, BEN staff identified 18 very diverse ethnic community groups from the urban centres of Cardiff, Swansea, Newport and Port Talbot who had not visited the countryside before and assisted them to organise educational visits to outdoor activity centres, historic attractions and nature reserves.

Proper Planning

BEN staff initially met with group leaders to explain the purpose of the project. They then conducted focus groups to find out what people would like to do, showing examples of the types of destination and activities on offer, including things like nature walks, fruit picking, environmental arts and storytelling, team games, sports and boat trips. Each group undertook an activity designed to introduce them to new recreational opportunities or raise awareness of sustainable management of the countryside.

A key element underpinning the success of this project was that each group could choose, from among a wide selection of options, activities appropriate to their needs and desires. For instance, a group of Hindu ladies arranged a talk about medical herbalism as part of their trip, comparing the Welsh and Indian traditions. Younger people such as the boys and girls from Swansea Muslim Youth League preferred adventure activities; whereas a group of families from the African Caribbean community elected to visit a demonstration farm.

BEN arranged that all group leaders took part in pre-trip site visits to check that venues were suitable and reassure the group that their needs would be





met. Thirteen of the group leaders also received First Aid training, with the award of a certificate and a first aid pack from the British Red Cross Society.

Members from six of the groups also attended a half day certificated training session, run by BEN staff, to help them get the most from their trip, to make sure trips were well organised and that groups would have the confidence to undertake their own outings safely and independently in future. Based on the 'Guide to Organising Countryside Visits' handbook, created by BEN, the course covered researching venues, producing an itinerary, roles and responsibilities, parental consent, risk assessment, insurance, recruiting participants, the Countryside Code and how to evaluate an event.



The Future

The New Horizons project has provided many urban ethnic groups with a positive image of the countryside. Having been carefully introduced to the countryside, all of the groups had a great time and are really keen and confident to do return trips on their own.

FACTFILE

- **Funders:**

National Assembly for Wales, via the Adfywio grant scheme, managed jointly by the Countryside Council for Wales and the Welsh Tourist Board

- **Partners:**

Activity Providers:

Amelia Farm, Black Mountain Activity Centre, Brecon Beacons National Park, British Red Cross Society, Clyne Activity Centre, Folly Farm, Heatherton, Llangorse Lake,

Museums and Galleries of Wales (Big Pit and Museum Of Welsh Life, St Fagan's), National Botanic Garden Of Wales, Storey Arms Activity Centre, Tretower (Historic House And Garden)

Community Groups:

Al Khoei Boys Group, Al Manar, Anondho Dhara (Newport Bangladeshi Group), Awetu (Black Mental Health Group), Cardiff Healthy Living Programme, 'Barefoot' African Caribbean, Bangladeshi, Hindu, Parkistani, Somali and Yemeni groups, Chinese Co-Op Community Centre, Displaced People in Action, Filipino Community, Fitzalan School, Ilaays Somali Group, Malay Society, Minority Ethnic Women's Network Swansea, Newport MIND, Port Talbot Bangladeshi Women's Group, SKLP Samaj Centre Women's Group, Swansea Muslim Youth League, University Of Wales Swansea Islamic Students Society Female Group, Youth Access Swansea Bangladeshi Group

- **Target:**

Ethnic community groups new to environmental participation

- **Numbers:**

18 diverse groups, ranging in size from 9-44 participants, amounting to a total of 366 individuals

- **Resources:**

BEN can provide training for groups in using 'A Guide to Organising Countryside Visits'.

- **Key points:**

- Ensuring a positive first experience is the key to such a project for new audiences. Having been introduced to the countryside, through carefully, jointly planned programmes of activities, all of the groups had a great time and are really keen and confident to organise return trips on their own.



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