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Water Sports in Poole Harbour
The "water sports mecca of the UK" drawing visitors to Dorset
Water Sports in Poole Harbour

The VALMER survey of outdoor recreation in Poole Harbour, Dorset collated information from 546 people taking part in windsurfing, kitesurfing, kayak/canoeing, bird watching, jet skiing and water skiing in the harbour between March and August 2013.

The average spend per day for each person ranged from £20 to £105 across the activities. Most of this money was being spent on food and accommodation in and around the harbour.

The majority of people were part of a group, with an average group size of three to ten people, depending on the activity.

Overall 98% of the respondents to the survey said they would return to Poole do the activity there again.

Andy Gratwick owns a small watersports school in Poole Harbour, teaching kitesurfing, paddleboarding, powerboating and wakeboarding.

His business employs a part-time member of staff in his office and a full-time instructor year-round, as well as six to ten freelancers during the summer. The business has an annual turnover of about £90,000.

“Poole Harbour is as fundamental to the business as a mountain is to skiers,” says Andy, “we would not be able to do anything as a business without the beautiful waters of Poole Harbour as our office.”

Angelo Couchman owns Surface2Air Sports, a watersports shop and kitesurf school in Poole. He employs six members of staff and his business has an annual turnover of around £1.1 million.

According to Angelo, “Poole Harbour is best described as the watersports mecca of the UK.”

Angelo also added: “I can honestly say that if watersports were to leave the harbour for any reason then it would be a disaster for my business let alone how it would affect other local businesses such as B&Bs and restaurants. It would have a huge impact on both kitesurfing lessons and sales of equipment.”

Further information

Data originates from T. Hooper (Plymouth Marine Laboratory), A. Brocklesby (Dorset Coast Forum) and J. Feaver (previously Dorset Coast Forum).

https://www.dorsetforyou.com/dorset-coast-forum

Contact: dorset.coast@dorsetcc.gov.uk
Grouse shooting in County Durham
A valuable economy for rural communities
Grouse shooting in County Durham

Shooting creates a valuable economy for many remote communities. In 2009 the Countryside Alliance measured this contribution, focusing on the impact of grouse shooting in the two County Durham parishes of Blanchland and Hunstanworth.

Questionnaires delivered to 108 households across the two parishes revealed that grouse shooting played a central role in community life, with positive social and economic benefits widely recognized.

The research revealed that one in five residents were directly involved in grouse shooting, including gamekeepers, loaders, beaters, flankers and shooting managers.

Of those responding to the survey, 91% agreed that grouse shooting delivered economic, social or environmental benefits, with nearly two thirds agreeing that they benefitted directly from grouse shooting. According to a parish survey quoted in the Daily Telegraph the average hotel occupancy rate rises from 50% to 65% during the four-month shooting season.

Blanchland postmistress and village store owner Jacqui Dart told the Telegraph: "Throughout the shooting season I get an awful lot more business in the shop. My daughter relies on the money she can pick up as a beater during the school holidays."

Moria, the owner of the Punch Bowl Inn in Consett, said:

“We have a lot customers during the shoot; many of whom book months in advance as part of an organised party. The shoot is really quite important as it provides very good business for the local community during the quiet months.”

Further information

Reproduced with permission from “The Economic and Social Benefits of Grouse Shooting Within the Parishes of Blanchland & Hunstanworth” (Countryside Alliance, 2009). Photo supplied by the Countryside Alliance.

http://thepunchbowlinn.info/
http://www.countryside-alliance.org
http://www.telegraph.co.uk/earth/countryside/5979263/How-grouse-shooting-helps-rural-economies.html

Contact:
Press-office@countryside-alliance.org
Wales Coast Path
A world renowned path worth £32 million to the Welsh economy
Wales Coast Path

Completed in 2012 and encircling all three sides of the Welsh Peninsula along the entire 870 miles of coastline, the Wales Coast Path is the only footpath of its kind in the world.

In the 12 months up to September 2013 the path generated approximately 2.82 million visitors and added £32 million to Wales’ economy.

94% of visitors were walking for leisure, with 38% of them visiting the path as part of a longer holiday.

The impact of the path on the local economy is clear with approximately 5,400 tourism-related businesses and 122 extra jobs created within 2km of the route.

But the benefits the path has brought to Wales are not purely economic – since its official opening in May 2012 the Wales Coast Path has generated an extraordinary amount of positive coverage in the international press.

It has had exposure on many major news outlets including the BBC, ITV, the New York Times, USA Today and Fox News.

In November 2013 Elizabeth Williams, landlady of the Three Golden Cups pub in Vale of Glamorgan, told BBC News that the path had had a “dramatic effect” on her business:

“It’s possible that we may have had to close the business without [the path]. Casual walkers are more resilient – if you get a cold day with drizzle, they will still come out and walk. It has enabled us to take on an apprentice chef and a part-timer from the village.”

The Wales Coast Path was included as one of the nominees for Virtual Tourist’s 8th Wonder of the World alongside outstanding beauty spots such as Yellowstone National Park in the USA.

National Geographic magazine named the Pembrokeshire coast section of the path in their top ten places in the world to visit. And in Lonely Planet’s 2012 Best in Travel guide the Wales Coast Path was voted the greatest region on earth.

Further information

Quotes taken from BBC News article:
http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-25096911
Accessed 09/03/2014.

Photos supplied by Quentin Grimley at the Wales Coast Path Team, Natural Resources Wales

http://www.walescoastpath.gov.uk
http://naturalresourceswales.gov.uk/

Contact:
wcp@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk
Angling in Assynt
Angling tourism draws visitors to a remote Scottish community
Angling in Assynt

Assynt, in Sutherland, West Scotland, is an area of outstanding natural beauty and natural scientific interest. Around 1,000 people live within 475 square kilometres of largely remote, mountainous landscape. Inverness, the nearest major population centre, is over 2 hours’ drive away.

The quiet, scenic environment and healthy fish stocks in Assynt make it a popular destination for fishing and the impact of visiting anglers has been monitored by research agency Substance.

Angling tourism is estimated to have directly contributed between £887,000 and £1.1m to the Assynt community in 2009-10 – equating to approximately £400,000 Gross Value Added. In employment terms, angling was estimated to have created between 25 and 31 full time equivalent jobs.

A survey of visiting anglers revealed that almost a third had travelled between 151 and 200 miles to Assynt, with over one in five visitors travelling between 451 and 500 miles.

A 48 year old interviewee said:

“I deliberately went [to Assynt] to fish. I wanted to find the wildest, most natural environment within which to fish brown trout and Assynt seemed the right place to go. It was very good. I liked the scenery and the idea that I had to figure out everything, explore everything on my own.

“I choose lochs that are as inaccessible, remote and as difficult to get to as possible. The lochs I find in this way are in their most original, pristine state. I want to explore them and understand them myself, which takes years.”

Further information


www.assyntanglinginfo.org.uk
http://www.substance.coop/node/654

Contact:
Dr Adam Brown
Research Director, Substance
adam@substance.coop
The Hadrian’s Wall Path
A coast-to-coast path bringing in over £19 million for local communities
The Hadrian’s Wall Path

The Hadrian’s Wall Path is an unbroken 84 mile signposted footpath stretching coast-to-coast from Wallsend, Newcastle upon Tyne, to Bowness-on-Solway on the west coast of England. It’s completion in 2003 made the full length of the Wall – designated UNESCO World Heritage status in 1987 – accessible to the public for the first time.

The Hadrian’s Wall route is part of a family of outstanding long distance paths known as the National Trails. Across England and Wales, 15 trails form a network of over 3500km throughout some of the country’s finest landscapes. In 2005 the Countryside Agency’s National Trails report estimated that 12 million people visit the National Trails every year – including walkers, cyclists, horse riders and people with limited mobility.

An economic impact study conducted in 2010 by Natural England suggested that the Hadrian’s Wall Path brought in £19 million for the surrounding communities between 2003 and 2007; a significant return on the initial £6 million cost of establishing the route.

Nigel Mills, Director of World Heritage and Access at the Hadrian’s Wall Trust, said that since the study in 2010 there had been an increase in the number of walkers on the Path:

“In particular there has been an increase in the number of end-to-end walkers, and the Hadrian’s Wall Trust estimates that there are 12,000 end-to-end walkers who spend £4 million a year.”

The Trust also estimates that 750,000 casual users of the Path spend £190 million a year in Cumbrian and Northumberland, a third of which are believed to visit the region specifically for the National Trail.

Further information

Information provided by the Hadrian’s Wall Trust.

http://www.twitter.com/nationaltrailuk

http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/hadrians-wall-path

http://www.visithadrianswall.co.uk/hadrians-wall-trust
Vallum Farm

Vallum Farm, near Newcastle upon Tyne, is a successful family business offering artisan produce in the heart of Hadrian’s Wall country. The tea room, restaurant and shop are stocked by a community of local producers in addition to the produce of the dairy cattle and crops farmed on site.

The farm has been in the Moffitt family for over five decades, but it was only ten years ago that owners Peter and Vicky Moffitt began making ice cream and yoghurt, and opened a small shop. On the back of steady growth a restaurant was opened and two bakers and a cheesemaker joined the team. Over eight years Vallum grew from being a traditional farm to one which currently has around 45000 visitors a year. The business has enjoyed growth of 10-15% in the last two years, with further investment expected in the near future.

The farm is located on the Hadrian’s Wall Path at Milecastle 18, one of the regular Roman installations along the Wall, and the route ensures a steady flow of customers.

“Over the last ten years awareness of the Path has increased dramatically both for us as site owners and for the public in general,” says Vicky Moffitt. “In the summer there is a steady stream of walkers coming down the drive with their sticks. We have tweaked our offering at the tea room to include sandwiches and drinks for people who want a snack for later on in the day.”

During the high season 40 staff work at Vallum Farm, including younger people employed in seasonal positions who help meet the extra demand. The Moffitts have also taken on an apprentice and offer paid work experience to an agricultural business student as part of an arrangement with Newcastle University.

“Such is our realisation of the importance of our location that we have been working more closely with the Hadrian’s Wall Trust over the last three years. They have created a 20m long map, which will be erected in our internal venue space, to show walkers where our produce comes from along the route – there are eight producers from coast to coast.”

Further information

Information provided by Vallum Farm

http://www.vallumfarm.co.uk/

Twitter: @vallumfarm

Contact:
Vicky Moffitt
Moffittv@googlemail.com
Shepherds Walks

In 1999 Jon Monks established Shepherds Walks, which today offers a range of guided walks, training courses and walking holidays in the north of England.

As a full-time Hill Shepherd in Northumberland Jon was more used to looking after sheep when he first branched out into guiding people, but his knowledge and understanding of the landscape has provided a solid foundation for the successful growth of his business. As Shepherds Walks has grown he has worked hard to retain the personal touch.

Initially Jon produced walking guides from a shepherd’s perspective. He now has 12 members of staff and receives additional support from volunteers. The guides who accompany walkers are often local retirees who work on a seasonal basis.

In the office Jon has three members of permanent staff, one of which is a young management apprentice. Aged 19, and with no experience prior to working at Shepherds Walks, she is returning to college to focus on achieving an NVQ in business management.

Shepherds Walks has grown consistently over the years; in 2012-13 Jon’s business saw 3500 customers and turnover increased by 32%. Jon estimates that on average overnight visitors spend around £130 per person per day.

The Hadrian’s Wall Path is an important driver of business for Shepherds Walks, with one in ten customers using the route. Jon has observed a huge increase in walkers since the route was designated a National Trail. “Businesses have popped up, and the route markets itself,” he says. “The Hadrian’s Wall Path walks are the easiest to sell because it’s a World Heritage site and has National Trail status.”

Jon estimated that in 2013 Shepherds Walks guided 120 foreign visitors along the Hadrian’s Wall Path, and considers these visitors to be particularly important: “Overseas visitors bring in new money and spend more. They are on a holiday of a lifetime and don’t worry about spending an extra £30 here and there.”

Looking ahead, Jon believes his business will continue to grow: “The profile of walking has grown in the last ten years – there has been a boom. A lot of day walkers are slightly older and want to keep fit as well as enjoy the history and heritage of the World Heritage Site. Challenge walks have emerged and are attracting a younger, fitter and more affluent audience.”

Further information

Information, and photos on pages 2 and 4, supplied by Shepherd’s Walks.

http://www.shepherdswalks.co.uk/
Twitter: @shepherdswalks

Contact: Jon Monks, Shepherds Walks jon.monks@shepherdswalks.co.uk
Richardson’s Boating Holidays
A successful family business helping visitors enjoy the Norfolk Broads
Richardson’s Boating Holidays

Richardson’s Boating Holidays has helped visitors experience the best of the Norfolk Broads for 70 years. The company began life in 1944 at the Old Mill House Boatyard in Oulton Broad with the purchase of a motor cruiser named the “Mac Nab”.

The Richardson family’s boat hire business continued to grow and today their fleet of over 300 makes them the largest operator on the Broads – an area covering 200 kilometres of navigable waterways.

The Richarsons are proud of the family’s boating heritage – spanning six generations – and a large base of loyal customers who return year after year. The business will remain in family hands for the foreseeable future, with Mr Richardson currently in the process of handing over the reins to his sons Paul and Clive.

The success of Richardson’s Boating Holidays is one example of the value of Britain’s family of National Parks, of which the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads are a member.

In reference to the importance of the Broads business Greg Munford, CEO of Richardson’s Leisure Ltd, said: “Richardson’s has recently taken the strategic decision to work closely in partnership with the Broads Authority to promote tourism in the area and to produce relevant and useful information for visitors, including sponsorship of the Eating Out in the Broads Guide.”

“In doing this we recognise the importance of being a member of the National Parks family to help encourage people to visit this magical and unique destination.”

Collectively, England’s ten National Parks account for 9.3% of total land area. They are important natural landscapes which are protected and accessible to the general public.

Research conducted by National Parks England in 2013 suggests that around 90 million people visit the National Parks every year, spending over £4 billion. This activity is thought to support 68,000 full time equivalent jobs.

In Wales, National Parks account for 20% of land area and attract an estimated 12.92 million visits a year. According to research commissioned by National Parks Wales in 2013 this equates to over half a billion pounds in value added to the Welsh economy. This in turn provides employment for an estimated 30,000 people across Wales.

Further information


Additional information and photo provided by Richardson’s Boating Holidays.

http://www.richardsonsboatingholidays.co.uk/

Contact:
Greg Munford
CEO, Richardson’s Leisure Ltd
Greg.munford@richardsonsgroup.net
Trail Riding in Wales
Open byways sustain small business and support local tourism
Trail Riding in Wales

Marianne and Colin Walford run a trail riding business in Staylittle, Mid Wales. After seeing an opportunity for offering a less intensive experience than off-road schools, they set up the business part-time in 2004 and went full-time in 2005.

They rely entirely on byways open to all traffic and unmetalled, unclassified roads for their riding. They also use a few miles of track with permission but do not use private land.

“We mainly ride in Gwynedd and Ceredigion,” said Marianne, “the highways and rights of way departments of these councils both seem to be aware of the value of tourism businesses like ours using the rough surfaced roads. We use a few routes in Powys but there are many closures which makes planning a good circular route difficult.”

She added: “If access to the unclassified roads and byways were stopped, our business would cease.”

“Our customers often comment about the beauty of the moorland areas near Nantymoch Reservoir in Ceredigion and the view from ‘Ffordd Ddu’ near Cader Idris looking across the Mawdach Estuary. They enjoy seeing the red kites and other wildlife, which has included wild goats, deer, weasels, stoats, foxes and birds.”

At present the business is run full-time by Marianne and Colin with a couple of helpers who work on a casual basis. They are hoping to employ a worker for 20 hours a week in the future.

The Walfords’ trail riding business also brings benefits to numerous other small businesses in the area. They take customers to local cafés at lunchtime, and hotels, pubs and B&Bs in the Llanidloes, Devils Bridge and Machynlleth areas all benefit from their customers staying overnight.

Marianne estimates that over the course of a year their business generates around 300 overnight stays, with roughly half of those staying two nights.

She says that customers who have not visited Mid Wales before are usually very complimentary and often make remarks such as “I’d like to bring the family for a holiday up here” or “we’ll definitely be back!”

Access to rights of way and the outdoors is vital for the Walfords’ business and many of the other businesses in the area which benefit from the trade that their customers bring.

Further information

Information received from Marianne and Colin Walford.
Photos supplied by Marianne Walford.

http://trailrides-wales.com

Contact:
Marianne Walford
marianne@trailrides-wales.com
01686 430 522
Cycling at Haldon Forest Park
Off-road cycle routes attract year-round visitors and boosts income
Cycling at Haldon Forest Park

Situated on the outskirts of Exeter, Haldon Forest Park lies within the UK’s most visited holiday region and is a prime example of the importance of pedal power as a driver of year-round tourism.

New off-road cycling routes were created throughout Haldon Forest Park as part of ‘1 South West’ – a four-year project led by the Forestry Commission England and funded by Sport England and the Rural Development Programme for England.

The new cycling infrastructure offers opportunities for cyclists of all abilities, drawing in over 33,000 visitors across the course of a year – not just within the peak summer season.

Visiting cyclists stay on the site for between three and four hours on average, with visitors from outside the South West typically spending more than visitors from within the region. The overall direct economic impact of on and off-site spending in 2012 was estimated to be £704,505.

Sources of income include car parking charges, including an annual ‘Discovery Pass’ offering discounts for regular users and revenue from a café and a bike hire shop.

The lure of high-quality off-road cycling will continue to pull in visitors; of 482 respondents to a survey, 99% indicated they would return to the Park to use the cycling routes in the future.

Further information

http://www.forestry.gov.uk/haldonforestpark

http://www.1sw.org.uk/experience/

Contact:
David West
Development Manager (National), Forestry Commission
David.m.west@forestry.gsi.gov.uk
Camping and Caravanning

Getting closer to nature brings families together
Camping and Caravanning

The Camping and Caravanning Club site at Folkestone is a haven for nature lovers. Its dramatic cliff-top position, offering views of the English Channel and the Dover-Folkestone Heritage Coast, is complemented by the surrounding trees of The Warren – a local Nature Reserve and Site of Special Scientific Interest.

In 2013, the site hosted 8,497 visitors, including many birdwatchers drawn to the site by The Warren’s rare wildlife. Campers can take advantage of the reserve’s nature trails and the guided walks that take place between April and September.

But the benefits of the site at Folkestone, and others like it across the country, extend beyond providing a boost to the local visitor economy.

In 2011, The Camping and Caravanning Club commissioned academics at Liverpool John Moores University to consider the impact on individuals by answering a simple question: are those who camp richer for it?

After reviewing the evidence and questioning campers and non-campers, the researchers concluded that those who go camping regularly feel happier, healthier, more sociable and closer to their families.

The study revealed that on average, 83% of campers feel very close to their partner compared to 59% of non-campers, and that 69% feel very close to their children compared to 46% of non-campers.

Children who camp notice a difference in their parents’ behaviour when camping. Eight out of ten children said their parents are less stressed when camping, and 76% said their parents have more time for hugs.

And these positive effects were certainly felt by Camping and Caravanning Club member Louise Chase. “Camping gives my kids a chance to see a different part of the country and to do many different things – walks, activities and meet lots of new people. We love the outdoor life as it allows us to spend lots of quality time together.”

Su Chapman, another club member, also felt the benefits of quality time on site: “Our children have spent time with Dad, whittling sticks and learning to use a penknife properly, learning how to cook in the open air and we have had great fun pitching a tent together, a real treat when Dad’s mobility is limited.”

Further information

Statistics and quotes reproduced from “Are those who camp richer for it? The psychological and social benefits of the camping experience” with permission from The Camping and Caravanning Club. Photo supplied by The Camping and Caravanning Club.

www.campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk
Twitter: @CampAndCaravan

Contact:
Andrew Jones, Senior Business Intelligence Manager, Camping and Caravanning Club.
Andrew.jones@campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk
RECONOMICS

www.reconomics.works

The British Horse Society
Educating, protecting and campaigning for horse riders
The British Horse Society

The British Horse Society (BHS) is dedicated to improving the lives of horses. In addition to this they educate, campaign for and protect the 3.5 million people in the UK involved in horses from enthusiasts to riders, carriage drivers and professionals to help them get the most out of their relationship with horses.

Learning to ride is fun and an enjoyable experience for people of all ages. The BHS introduces more people to riding than any other organisation in the UK. It gives thousands of riders the chance to enjoy competitions and events with their horse.

The British Horse Society and the British Equestrian Federation work together to increase adult participation in horse riding by encouraging people to experience the joy of riding.

The BHS has over 1,000 Approved Centres in the UK and overseas with quality and qualified teaching staff. The BHS standards applied to each centre and the instructors guarantee that the level of horse care will be first class and all BHS Approved Centres are regularly monitored to ensure that all health and safety and regulatory requirements are met.

To support those centres, riders and carriage drivers, the BHS Access team at Stoneleigh and its 200 Access and Bridleways Officers around the country work tirelessly to protect and increase equestrian public rights of way so that people have safe off road routes to ride, carriage drive on.

This team and their invaluable network of volunteers were successful in adding 975 kilometres of new routes to the National Equestrian Route Network in 2013.

With over 111,000 members enjoying personal benefits already, anyone can become a member of the BHS and join a thriving and dedicated community that supports horses, horse lovers and professionals.

Further information

Information supplied by the British Horse Society.

www.bhs.org.uk

Twitter: @BritishHorse

Contact:
Mark Weston
Director of Access, Safety and Welfare, British Horse Society
Mark.weston@bhs.org.uk
Competing Outdoors
Memorable experiences in our greatest sporting arena
The Scottish Six Days

In 2011 the Scottish Six Days Orienteering Event took place from Sunday 31 July to Saturday 6 August in Benderloch.

Six competitions took place on courses across Argyll and Bute and there were a range of social events throughout the week including whisky tasting, music from local bands and ceilidhs.

On top of all that the Scottish Six Days five-a-side football tournament also took place at the event centre in Benderloch. A total of 3,719 people visited the event.

88% of the participants said the event was the only or one of the main reasons for their visit to Scotland and 99% stayed overnight whilst attending.

Visitors undertook a wide range of other activities whilst on their trip to the event with the most common being a short walk, a longer walk/hike, or running and cycling.

When asked after the event, 86% agreed that Scotland is a good destination for an active holiday and 85% said they would be likely to attend the next event.

A report produced by Ekos estimated that the event generated a net additional expenditure of £1.9 million in Argyll and Bute and £2.4 million in Scotland more widely.

Further information

Information taken from Scottish 6 Days Orienteering Event: Report for Scottish 6 Day Company produced by Ekos.

http://www.scottish6days.com/2013
http://www.britishorienteering.org.uk/
The Giant’s Causeway Sportive

The third annual Giant's Causeway Coast Sportive took place on Saturday 7 September 2013 along roads within the Causeway Coast and Glens of Antrim Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The event was set up by Outdoor Recreation NI with the aim of driving cycle tourism and encouraging participation. Despite unappealing weather conditions on the day 800 participants took part in the cycle and provided a big boost for the local economy outside of the busy season. 44% of participants stayed overnight to attend the sportive with over 60% of those staying two nights or more.

It is estimated that the event created 898 bed nights and an economic benefit of £169,730 in the Moyle area. It is also estimated to have generated a further £75,511 in economic benefit to the whole of Northern Ireland.

Berkeley and Claire White have run the An Caisleán B&B in Ballycastle for 13 years. For the last three years they have noticed a significant economic impact on their business from the Giant's Causeway Sportive.

Berkeley said: “The sportive definitely generates a busy few days of custom when business would otherwise be quiet. We are nearly full when we would otherwise expect to be no more than half full in mid-September. We might be talking about £300 or £400 of revenue.”

The boost to Berkeley and Claire’s business also brings wider economic benefits to the surrounding area. Berkeley said: “We buy our food from local retailers – the butcher and the fruit shop as well as other Ballycastle stores. We don’t provide lunch or evening meals so our guests will eat at one of the five or so local restaurants and frequent the local bars and nightclub.”

Guests staying at An Caisleán also go shopping in Ballycastle town and many of the cyclists attending the sportive bring along their families who will go to the Rope Bridge, Bushmills Distillery, The Giant’s Causeway, Ballycastle Museum or have a round of golf while the sportive is taking place.

The Giant’s Causeway Coast Sportive provides an important boost for many businesses like Berkeley and Claire’s in an otherwise quiet time of year. It is also very popular with the cyclists – in 2013 94% of the participants said the event met or exceeded their expectations and 96% are looking forward to taking part in next year’s sportive.

Further information

Information from Giant’s Causeway Coast Sportive Review October 2013 provided by Kathryn Callaghan of the Outdoor Recreation Network. Information about An Caisleán B&B provided by Berkeley and Clare White with permission to reproduce.

http://www.giantscausewaycoastsportive.com/
Attingham Park
An historic National Trust estate enhanced by outdoor activity
Attingham Park

Attingham Park is a National Trust estate lying between Shrewsbury and the River Severn in Shropshire. The Mansion, built in 1785, sits at the heart of 400 acres of green space including a deer park, woodland, a walled garden and playing field.

Attingham attracts an ever increasing number of visitors with over 375,000 visitors in 2013. The outdoors offer is particularly popular with local, repeat visitors but the work of sports development officer, Lucy Newbury, has widened its appeal even further.

Lucy’s work began in May 2013 following the formation of a partnership between Sport England and the National Trust. She was one of six sports development officers recruited by National Trust estates around the country, and in the twelve months since then a wide range of physical activity opportunities have been opened up at Attingham.

Throughout the estate routes for walkers and runners are signposted clearly and a permanent orienteering course is in place. Sports including archery, climbing, community games and rounders are all on offer throughout the year. The play field area has been kitted out with volleyball nets and table tennis tables, supplemented by other sports equipment made available on an informal basis. Canoeing also takes place on the River Tern which flows through Attingham Park.

“When the project started there were a lot of dog walkers coming to Attingham Park but few other activities,” says Lucy. “We have the perfect outdoor gym with miles of footpaths, bridleways, woodland, parkland, waterways and play fields. Over time there has been a change of perception and the estate is increasingly seen as a sporting venue. One thing we have noticed is that sport has helped us to engage new people – people that would never normally associate themselves with the National Trust.”

The new emphasis on outdoor activity has had an impact in attracting visitors to the estate, largely thanks to the support of Energize Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin (the County Sport Partnership), community clubs, local media and a strengthening social media presence. Lucy believes this increase in numbers has a positive impact for the estate’s income:

“Generally when visitors to Attingham take part in sporting activities they tend to stay longer and there is a noticeable impact on spending on refreshments, particularly when we host one-off events. There’s also a clear benefit for the clubs that run sessions on the estate as they have an opportunity to engage potential members.”
The ability to engage people who don’t normally participate in sport or recreation is a particular strength of the programme. 74% of participants in the programme at Attingham reported that they were first timers, and 77% replied that they were intending to come again.

This picture is replicated across England. The collective efforts of the National Trust’s Sports Development Officers have resulted in 60,000 people taking part in physical activity in 2013 – 31% of which were previously inactive. Nearly three quarters of participants rated their experience as “very enjoyable”, with 93% saying they would do the activity again.

Lucy believes this success is due to the nature of the offer: “There are unlimited opportunities to engage in sport and outdoor recreation through informal, unstructured activity, led groups or bigger sport events. Much of our sport offer is designed so visitors can stumble upon it and just have a go, we call this ‘accidental sport’.”

As part of Lucy’s role she also coordinates outdoor recreation activities at Carding Mill Valley, an extensive area of upland heath in South Shropshire offering opportunities for walking, mountain biking and horse riding. She is working to promote open water swimming, fell running and orienteering, ensuring sustainable use of the area is maximised.

Lucy’s work is supported by Jess Foster a Sports Development and Coaching graduate from Staffordshire University. Jess started a six month internship in January 2014 and has gained valuable experience managing the ‘Game On’ sports festival which takes place on the May Day bank holiday weekend.

“The internship is invaluable for my personal development. Previously, I had attended interviews and been told my general volunteering was good but job experience was essential. This is the perfect opportunity to learn the trade. National Trust Sport is a new programme, so I am part of a unique project which will hopefully help me to stand out post-internship and therefore deem me as more employable.”

Further information

Information and photos provided by the National Trust.

www.nationaltrust.org.uk

Contact:
Lucy Newbury
Sports Development Officer, National Trust
Lucy.Newbury@nationaltrust.org.uk

Rob Joules
Sports Partnership Manager
National Trust
Rob.Joules@nationaltrust.org.uk
Chain Reaction Cycles
A small family business that became a global online retailer
Chain Reaction Cycles

In 1984 George and Janice Watson decided to open a bike shop. Armed with just a £1500 bank loan they set up Ballynure Cycles, in the small village of Ballynure in Northern Ireland.

In 1989 they renamed their business Chain Reaction Cycles following a necessary move to a neighboring village which allowed the business to expand. A decade later the Watson family recognised that their competitors were moving toward online sales, and established a website in response.

Fifteen years on from the birth of the website, Chain Reaction Cycles is the largest dedicated online retailer of cycling equipment globally, shipping 90,000 different products to over 115 countries.

The company’s success has been documented in a report commissioned by Sport Northern Ireland. Chain Reaction Cycles employs 465 people, generating £7.4m in profit annually and contributes £2.6m in taxation. As a business it contributes £16m of Gross Value Added – at least 75% of which can be directly attributed to outdoor recreation.

The successful development of this small family business has been an important factor in the growth of mountain biking in Northern Ireland. Today Chain Reaction Cycles sponsors a number of high profile events, runs its own professional team and supports other cycling teams across the country.

Throughout this period of success the company has largely retained its ownership structure, with Janice and George’s son Chris now working as its director.

Further information


www.chainreactioncycles.com/
Twitter: @chain_reaction
RECONOMICS
www.reconomics.works

Go Ape
The tree top adventure that became an international brand
Go Ape

Go Ape, the UK's leading tree top adventure provider, has its roots in Thetford Forest, Norfolk. Husband and wife team Tristram and Rebecca Mayhew started the business after becoming fed up with their mainstream careers, seeking instead to pursue the outdoors life that they loved. With the support of the Forestry Commission the first Go Ape course opened in March 2002.

In the early days, the booking system consisted of a desk diary and a mobile phone. Twelve years later, Go Ape welcomes over 600,000 visitors across to its 29 locations across the UK and employs in excess of 700 people. In 2013 the business boasted a turnover of £14.5m, with over £5m paid to the Treasury as a result of its activities.

Go Ape is now an international brand, with almost 100,000 people visiting its six USA courses in 2013. Plans are in motion to expand the business in America even further and to establish courses in Russia. The scale and pace of Go Ape's success has been recognised by numerous awards, including the National Business Awards 'SME of the Year' title in 2009.

The growth of the Go Ape in the UK is projected to create 100 new jobs in 2014, which is likely to have a positive impact for young people in particular. Jerome Mayhew, Managing Director of Go Ape, explains:

"Go Ape courses are typically located in rural areas which tend to suffer from high levels of youth unemployment. Whilst we benefit from instructors of all ages, a considerable majority are in their early twenties, thereby providing a useful step into a career in the outdoors industry.

"All staff are provided with full training for their roles. In addition Go Ape provides sponsorship to employees to develop other life enhancing skills of their choice, ranging from supporting climbing expeditions, tall ship sailing and mountain biking all the way up to funding an MBA course."

Reflecting on the transformation of Go Ape from humble beginnings to an international brand, Jerome is clear about one of the most important factors:

"The early support of the Forestry Commission was instrumental in making Go Ape a commercial success. By having the courage to take a chance on a start-up company they allowed Go Ape to grow fast and create a strong and trusted brand."
Volunteering with the Canal and River Trust

Volunteers are the natural stewards of the waterways
Volunteering with the Canal and River Trust

The Canal and River Trust looks after 2000 miles of canals and rivers which flow through countryside and cities in England and Wales. The Trust – which is also the third largest owner of listed buildings in England – aims to use living waterways to transform places and enrich lives. Ensuring this vision becomes a reality is no mean feat and wouldn’t be possible without the significant efforts of volunteers.

Since the Trust’s establishment in 2012 its activities have been supported by 2,000 individual volunteers and over 250 local groups, including support from parish councils, scout groups and universities. The nature of volunteering opportunities varies. While some roles involve practical conservation and maintenance work others are desk-based, engaging individuals with administration, marketing and engineering skills. One of the most iconic volunteer positions at the Trust is that of the lock keeper. Volunteer lock keepers play a crucial role during the busy summer boating season and help keep age-old traditions alive. Lock keepers have been a fixture on Britain’s canals for hundreds of years.

The Canal and River Trust currently has 421 lock keepers working along tow paths across England and Wales. As the stewards of the canals, lock keepers are customer-focused and undertake a wide range of activities. They help boaters at busy locks, provide information about the surrounding area, and make connections between businesses, local people, passing boaters and towpath visitors. The Trust estimates that in an average week their lock keepers speak to over 4000 members of the public.

Gill Anlezark volunteers as a lock keeper on the Kennet and Avon Canal. As a regular boater and user of the local towpaths Gill spotted the volunteering opportunity on the canal website. “It was a chance to help boaters and other visitors to enjoy their time at the locks, and help to make sure that the locks were operated well”, she says. “The most enjoyable part of being a volunteer lock keeper is meeting all the visitors, boaters and walkers. Boaters can be very appreciative to have an extra pair of hands.”

A large number of volunteers are retired people from an array of backgrounds – on one lock an ex-carpenter works alongside a retired eye surgeon. Participants report that they gain a great deal from their position as a lock keeper. Working outdoors and staying fit are key motivations for people to contribute their time, as is a sense of pride in helping to protect a 200 year-old working heritage. These efforts benefit the population more widely – it is estimated that half of the population in England and Wales live within a 5 mile radius of a canal or river supported by the Trust.

Further information

Information and photo provided by the Canal and River Trust.

http://canalandrivertrust.org.uk

Contact:
Edward Moss
National Volunteering Manager, Canal and River Trust
Edward.moss@canalrivertrust.org.uk
U Canoe
Canoe England helping young people to build skills and confidence
U Canoe

U Canoe is an informal activity delivered to people aged 14-25 years in a variety of youth settings including schools, colleges, universities, ‘doorstep clubs’ and youth groups.

The scheme aims to encourage new young people to take part in canoeing, and offers an individualised programme in which participants lead the process and determine their outcomes from each U Canoe session.

At the heart of the initiative are the U Canoe Activators – young people who are trained by Canoe England to deliver and oversee ‘U Canoe Wired’ sessions. Activators are approachable, friendly and creative and they encourage other participants to try new things.

Since the programme was established in October 2013, 80 young people have been trained as Activators, ready to lead U Canoe sessions in educational environments and youth clubs.

The experience offers an opportunity to develop a range of skills and attributes outside of formal education, including management, communication and planning.

“By becoming an Activator I can be more people orientated, because I am working with people I would never have worked with before,” said 16 year old Georgia at Grantham College in Lincoln.

The training and personal development offered by U Canoe has a lasting impact for individuals’ confidence and employability.

Rachel, 19, is a student at Bath University and a member of the Canoe England Youth Forum. “Being a U Canoe Activator has been fantastic,” she said. “I enjoy getting people onto the water, and have been able to do work with Bath University and my local Outdoor Centre, both of which I am adding to my CV!”

Canoe England offers Activators support beyond their initial training. As well as providing the opportunity to volunteer at major sporting events, such as the GB Canoeing Slalom Selection Trials and World Championships, the governing body also provides vocational references and pro-active support for individuals in their search for employment after education.

Further information

Information and photo provided by Canoe England.

www.canoe-england.org.uk/ucanoe

Twitter: U_Canoe

Contact:
Howard Blackman
Head of Participation, Canoe England
Howard.Blackman@canoe-england.org.uk
Get Hooked on Fishing
Engaging socially excluded young people through angling
Get Hooked on Fishing

Get Hooked on Fishing (GHOF) was first established in 2000 by Mick Watson. Since then it has expanded into a charity working with young people between the ages of 5-25. In 2010 GHOF was working with 5,576 young people across England, Scotland and Wales.

GHOF projects use angling as an intervention tool to engage socially excluded young people. They work in some of the most deprived communities across the UK to deliver a range of angling related activities suitable for both males and females of all abilities. At the heart of the programme is its peer mentoring scheme which deploys youth volunteering to build self-esteem, confidence and transforms young people’s behaviour and relationship with society.

Angling intervention programmes do more than just take young people fishing. Instead, angling is effectively applied by intervention programmes to engage young people in a positive activity and work with them on their personal and social development.

The government estimates the financial cost of a fulltime placement in a pupil referral unit (PRU) following exclusion to be £15,000 a year. In contrast a pupil remaining in mainstream schooling costs around £4,000 a year. Angling intervention programmes working to re-engage young people in education and transform disruptive behaviour can cost in the range of £219 to £3,900 per student. These programmes are commonly used for early intervention to work with young people at risk of exclusion as well as assisting to re-engage young people in PRUs and smooth the transfer back to mainstream education.

Signposting young people to the range of careers available in subjects that interest them motivates young people to re-consider further education employment and training.

17 year old Jamie Prime was recruited as a participant on the GHOF sea fishing scheme in Wansbeck. He quickly became a peer mentor and under the guidance of project coordinator Darren McGlen started to get more and more involved with the Wansbeck programme – leading to him being named Young Volunteer of the Year in the Wansbeck Region. With support from the Environment Agency as soon as he was 18 GHOF sponsored Jamie through his level two coaching course. He was then able to join the expanding GHOF team working in paid employment as a part time coordinator.

The GHOF Shropshire programme drew together young people from the local estate with the local police and Community Support Officers (CSO), the Environment Agency and the local angling club to help clean a stretch of the river Rea Brook. West Mercia police have been working with GHOF Shropshire for a number of years.

One West Mercia Police Sergeant said: “We have seen huge reductions in anti-social behaviour year on year… It’s more to do with the relationship that’s been built than the few hours we keep them employed. The spinoff is they all know us very well and there is not a stigma attached to getting in touch and speaking to the police.”

Further information

www.ghof.org.uk
Contact: Sarah Collins, CEO, Get Hooked on Fishing: hello@ghof.org.uk
The Outdoor Partnership
Improving opportunities for people in disadvantaged communities
The Outdoor Partnership

The Outdoor Partnership uses outdoor recreation to improve opportunities for people in the most disadvantaged and isolated communities in North West Wales.

The organisation helps people to engage with the outdoors to improve their health as well as providing them with skills and employment prospects.

In 2013 64% of participants reported an improvement in confidence, 73% an improvement in health and 82% reported an improvement in their skill levels following participation in the Outdoor Partnership’s programmes and events.

The Outdoor Partnership has engaged with 120 unemployed and economically inactive people including those with work-limiting health conditions, young people not in employment, education or training, single parents and the over-50s.

They have provided exit routes into training, further learning, volunteering and employment – with 70% now in supported and sustained employment.

“I found myself unemployed again and again, with every period of unemployment becoming longer,” said one participant from Blaenau Ffestiniog, “my confidence was at an all-time low and I had little self-esteem when I came across the Outdoor Partnership and they offered me these amazing opportunities.”

“They believed I could do it, they believed I was competent! I have regained my confidence and am now a qualified Mountain Leader and working towards becoming a climbing instructor.”

The work of the Outdoor Partnership demonstrates that outdoor recreation has a vital role in giving unemployed people in isolated communities the confidence, skills and employment that they wouldn’t find elsewhere.

Further information

Information and photos supplied by the Outdoor Partnership.

www.outdoorpartnership.co.uk

Contact:
Tracey Evans
CEO, Outdoor Partnership
Tracey.evans@outdoorpartnership.co.uk
Climb Out

For 40 years Jake McManus suffered from serious psychotic depression and struggled to find a solution.

In 2013 Jake discovered climbing and says he felt an instant change just by getting outdoors. Since then his depression has slowly been lifting and life has turned around for his family.

“Climbing takes you to some amazing places you would never know existed in the UK,” he says. “There is also a deep rooted aspect of overcoming challenges, planning and socialising which eventually you arrange your whole life around.”

Jake started the website Climb Out to share his experience of beating depression through climbing and to give something back to the climbing community who have been so good to him.

“My life has really changed and I’m proud to say it’s all because of climbing and I want to promote the sport to anyone who wants to listen. I hope to show people that you don’t need to be the best climber to benefit from it.”

“I hope to start a network and possibly a forum where like-minded people can get in touch with each other,” Jake says. “I want to put instructors, indoor walls and outdoor companies together with people who are interested in climbing and any outdoor activity.”

“I also aim to organise events across the UK where people can get together without the stigma of who is depressed and who isn’t. I have started a crowdfund project to help pay for this and I have a mental health professional supporting Climb Out to help me approach it in the right way.”

Climbing has helped Jake achieve things he never would have dreamed of a year ago. He now has a diverse cross section of friends in different parts of the world and enjoys getting outdoors to see new places.

Further information

Information provided by the BMC with permission from Jake McManus.

www.climbout.co.uk

https://www.thebmc.co.uk/climbing-out-of-depression-jakes-story

Contact
Dr Catherine Flitcroft
Access and Conservation Officer, BMC
catherine@thebmc.co.uk
Walking for Health
Boosting wellbeing and confidence in cancer survivors
Walking for Health

Together the Ramblers and Macmillan Cancer Support deliver Walking for Health, an initiative helping people to get active and stay active.

In partnership they support 600 local schemes across England which offer short, free and friendly walks with the aim of helping more people – including those affected by cancer – discover the joys and health benefits of walking.

More than 70,000 people walk regularly with Walking for Health at 3,400 weekly walks. The walks are led by 10,000 volunteers who are all friendly, knowledgeable people, specifically trained for the job.

In just a short time, a small amount of regular exercise can significantly improve a person’s health, wellbeing and confidence.

“I joined Walking for Health to build up my fitness and improve my health following surgery to remove a tumour,” said Bryony Booth, from Hull in East Yorkshire.

“My first Walking for Health walk was really good. I was able to meet lots of people and found the walk easy going and not too hard for my health. I noticed each time I went out for the walks I felt stronger and stronger. After a few weeks I was able to get up the hill quicker, without the aid of a hiking stick, and my breathing was better.”

“Being out in the green spaces was really nice and it was also great socially – after the walks we finished up at a café for refreshments,” she added, “I’m pleased I’ve met so many different people and made such good friends.”

“A few months on, my fitness and health have really improved. I’ve also been out walking in the Yorkshire moors and on the coast in Whitby with friends.”

“Walking has been very important to my recovery – it’s helped me boost my energy levels, wellbeing and confidence.”

Further information

Information and photos provided by the Ramblers.

www.walkingforhealth.org.uk
www.ramblers.org.uk
www.macmillan.org.uk

Contact:
Cat Chapman
Cat.Chapman@ramblers.org.uk
Metal Detecting
A community activity promoting health and wellbeing
Metal Detecting

Brian Pollard is a committee member of the Coventry Heritage Detection Society and a representative on the National Council on Metal Detecting. In 2012 he was awarded the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Award for Volunteering, and is pictured below in conversation with HRH Prince Edward.

Now 75 years old, Brian has been detecting since his mid-forties. “A high proportion of the participants are senior citizens,” he says. “Metal detecting gives them an interest and gets them out in the fresh air.”

His society aims to organise a search at least once a week. A search typically lasts around five hours and involves 30 to 35 people. Walking at a steady pace, Brian estimates that the group could cover anywhere between two and ten miles, depending on the terrain covered.

“Being out in the open certainly gives you a healthy appetite, but it also improves general wellbeing. The mental stimulation of identifying artefacts and researching their history is my particular interest, and I enjoy passing this knowledge onto other members.”

“I also give a lot of presentations to all sorts of organisations – including schools, rotary clubs and farmers’ groups. I get a lot of fun out of it.”

Beyond the benefits of regular exercise, Brian highlights the importance of social interaction.

“Some members of the society are older single people, and taking part in the searches gives these people regular contact with others in the community. The social aspect is really important. At times, metal detecting feels more like the by-product.”

“Metal detecting is a very community-minded activity. We clear a lot of rubbish off fields for farmers and landowners, and we do charity rallies to raise money for good causes locally.”

Further information

Information provided by Brian Pollard.
www.ncmd.co.uk

Contact:
Brian Pollard
National Council of Metal Detecting
brirpol@virginmedia.com
Beat the Street
Smart card technology used to get a whole community walking
Beat the Street

Intelligent Health is a health IT company which seeks to combine behaviour change expertise with technology to promote more active lifestyles. This insight is the basis for Beat the Street, a walking competition for schools which has proved successful in encouraging a whole community to be more active outdoors.

Individuals participating in Beat the Street are able to track their walking by touching smart cards on walking tracking units at various locations, each approximately 0.3 miles apart. By tapping the cards people were generates points which are converted to prizes for individuals and for schools and libraries in the local community.

The technology was piloted in Caversham, Berkshire, from June to September 2013. Over 5,600 people took part – 20% of the population – of which 2,627 were children. Collectively the community covered a total distance of over 50,000 miles.

Beat the Street was promoted through schools, doctors’ surgeries, local business and community groups and local media. Even the local bus company got involved and ran poster campaigns encouraging people to get off the bus early to increase their walking as part of the scheme. An impressive two thirds of the participants who took part reported walking more as a result of Beat the Street and 80% said they would continue with the changes they had made.

A local parent said: “This has been a great way of making my daughter feel good about herself as she has been either leading or coming second most of the time in her school. She doesn’t enjoy school and it is a battle to get her to go, with this scheme she has been wanting to go and get her points.”

Beat the Street was conceived to meet the objectives of the Department of Transport Local Sustainable Transport Fund by reducing congestion, improving air quality and promoting economic growth – while also conveying health benefits associated with active travel.

And Dr William Bird, Founder and Director of Intelligent Health, believes that walking is the way forward: “Walking is the perfect exercise. It’s accessible to nearly everyone, free of cost, at a low impact and low level of risk. Studies have shown it to be effective in reducing the risk of many chronic illnesses from cardiovascular disease to depression.”

The project is being rolled out to the 180,000 residents of Reading in May 2014 with funding from the public health and local transport commissioners, with similar projects planned in six other cities in UK and Europe.

Further information

Information and photos provided by Intelligent Health.

www.intelligenthealth.co.uk
www.caversham.beatthestreet.me

Contact: Veronica Reynolds, Project Director. Veronica.Reynolds@intelligenthealth.co.uk
Blythe Estuary Green Travel Project

Investment in green infrastructure leads to healthier living
Blythe Estuary Green Travel Project

The Connect 2 Blyth Estuary Green Travel Project provided a comprehensive walking and cycling offer for communities centred around Blyth and neighbouring Bedlington in Northumberland.

Investment in green infrastructure has formed the basis of an action plan to improve the health and wellbeing of local people, provide sustainable travel options and opportunities for tourism, protect and enhance the landscape, and make the area more attractive to housing developers.

Completed in March 2012, the walking and cycling route includes ten miles of improved infrastructure linking schools and community facilities – together with five miles of riverside routes. This has created safer access to Blyth Town Centre for pedestrians and cyclists and has also improved access to green space for deprived communities.

The Green Travel Project was jointly funded by a government growth fund (£450,000) and investment from Northumberland County Council (£950,000) in addition to funding from the Sustrans ‘Connect 2’ scheme (£2.84m).

The project was awarded the grant because it demonstrated how green infrastructure could be used to help deliver strategic priorities such as the regeneration of Blyth Town Centre and Blyth Estuary. This was as well as creating an attractive and active setting for a new technology park and new housing planned for the estuary area.

The partnership with Sustrans has enabled Blyth to become the first ‘Active Travel Town’ in the UK, and a dedicated team has worked to increase awareness of alternative, sustainable modes of transport.

Early indications suggest that active travel along the new riverside route has increased significantly, from 14,712 users in 2010 to 56,175 in 2011. A survey conducted in 2012 revealed that 67% of people aware of the new routes said they had become more physically active, while cycling usurped public transport to become the preferred second choice for getting around after the car. Walking rose two places to become the third preferred choice.
Stuart Balmer-Howieson, Health and Safety Manager at Port of Blyth, has seen changes in the workplace too:

“We now have people travelling by bike to work from more than ten miles away. We have seen a number of employees change their lifestyle. Bike riding has proven to be a springboard to a better lifestyle.”

The Green Travel Project has also been a driver of tourism in Blythe. Nicola Mowbray, owner of the Ivy Café, said that the new cycle routes have had a really positive impact on business at the Ivy, especially since the Coast and Castles route now comes past its door.

“We are picking up a lot of trade from cycle tourism and are now looking into stocking spare tires and energy foods for cyclists. We’re also looking at offering cycle rides for local people starting from the cafe.”

The environmental impact of the project has also been significant; the reduction in pollution levels has encouraged Defra to lift the Air Quality Management Area status in Blythe Town Centre, in place since 2004.

Further information
Reproduced with permission from Natural England.

Full case study available at: http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/12642124

Contact:
Ingo Schüder, Lead Advisor, Natural England
Ingo.schuder@naturalengland.org.uk
BattleBack
Gliding helps rehabilitation after life-changing injuries
BattleBack

Wyvern Gliding Club, part of the Army Gliding Association, is providing gliding as part of BattleBack – an initiative which aims to improve and formalise the use of adventurous training and sport in the aftercare of wounded service personnel.

BattleBack uses the sport as a valuable tool for young soldiers’ rehabilitation following life-changing injuries in Afghanistan. Gliding is well placed to give disabled people the opportunity to participate on level terms with the able bodied; gliders are specially modified to allow pilots with varying injuries, including amputees and those with lower limb disabilities, to compete against others.

Major Martin Colclough, who runs the BattleBack programme, said: “Flying is superb for rehabilitation and the quicker we can get them flying solo the better, because psychologically there is a sense of real independence.”

Elsewhere, Steve Derwin has also benefitted from gliding following a road traffic accident in 1989, which left him in a wheelchair. Prior to his injury, canoeing and mountaineering played an important part in Steve’s life, both as a pastime and as a professional career.

After his accident Steve felt that his life was completely ruined:

“Quite simply I felt that I had lost all that I had lived for. It was not until a friend introduced me to gliding and pointed out that there was an opportunity for me to resume an active and exciting life in a challenging sport that I realised I could move forwards.

“I am now a solo pilot and an instructor with the British Gliding Association and I enjoy competing in cross-country competitions. Gliding has restored my purpose in life.”

Further information

Information and photo supplied by Alison Randle at the British Gliding Association report “Some already expanded horizons”. Thanks to Steve Derwin for additional information.

www.gliding.co.uk
www.wyvernglidingclub.co.uk

Contact:
Alison Randle, BGA
alison@gliding.co.uk
Riding for the Disabled
Riding offers health benefits for people of all ages and abilities
Riding for Health

The evidence for the physical and mental benefits of horse riding for both able-bodied and disabled people is well established.

In 2011 the University of Brighton published research commissioned by the British Horse Society which found that horse riding and associated activities (such as mucking out) can be classed as moderate intensity exercise.

Eight out of ten respondents to a questionnaire reported that riding had a positive impact on mood, and qualitative data suggests horse riding has a role to play in managing negative feelings relating to anxiety and depression.

Researchers found that riding had improved the condition of some respondents with a long-standing illness or disability, and importantly that these riders were able to take part at the same level of frequency and intensity as those without an illness or disability.

The Riding for the Disabled Association

These benefits are promoted by the Riding for the Disabled Association (RDA), a charitable organisation offering therapeutic riding experiences to people with disabilities across the UK.

The Association’s network of 500 volunteer groups deliver activities such as riding, carriage driving, vaulting and show jumping for 28,000 people every year. The organisation has been delivering these life-changing opportunities for over forty years, and takes great pride in the high standard of their 18,000 instructors and volunteers.

At the age of eight, Cameron was depressed, bullied, lacking in self-confidence and frustrated by his limitations. He couldn’t make sense of the world and began to retreat into himself.
Cameron started riding Rocket through his local RDA group, and over three years became increasingly confident and outgoing. He now rides five year-old Marmite.

“When I was eight I was so scared of life – Rocket stopped it being nasty,” he said, “Marmite is five, no one should be scared of life at five. I want to be his Rocket.”

For Caroline, who suffers with a rare bone disorder, the experience of riding is better than any medicine. “[The RDA] boosts me up so much,” she says, “and with doing the horse riding it’s built my muscles in my legs, and my legs don’t give way so much. Doing it gives me more confidence and a bit more responsibility.”

The riders aren’t the only beneficiaries of RDA – volunteers and therapists also gain a great deal. In the words of one volunteer, “volunteering is a magical experience: the delight of the children, their triumph over initial fears and the light of achievement shines out of their eyes.”
Meriden Park
Investment in outdoor facilities is part of the Olympic Legacy
An Olympic Legacy for Meriden Park

Meriden Park in Watford serves a number of high-rise and low-rise buildings, but once offered few facilities to the local community.

In 2012 Proludic, the Nottingham-based supplier and designer of outdoor play and sports equipment, was tasked by Watford Borough Council to help respond to this challenge and secure a lasting physical activity legacy for Meriden Park.

To achieve this aim the company worked closely with the council and Watford Community Housing Trust to deliver a revitalised space containing 23 pieces of equipment across seven different zones.

At the heart of the scheme is a challenging trail for children including climbing walls, netting and monkey bars. Other zones include fitness equipment, table games and facilities for football and basketball.

Pupils from the nearby Berrygrove Primary School were involved in the project from its inception and will continue to benefit from the facilities outside of school hours as well as through structured PE lessons. Equipment has also been added which caters for children with special needs.
In April 2012 the Meriden Park Sports Legacy Zone was officially opened, offering a new focal point for health and fitness in the community. Tina Barnard, Chief Executive of Watford Community Housing Trust, commented: "This is a hugely exciting project for us. We are very proud that [the park] will boast this new Sports Legacy Zone – the first of its kind in the UK".

A study assessing the impact of the facilities revealed that 81% of park users agreed that the new equipment had increased the length of time they use the facility and that perceptions of the green space had improved dramatically.

Michael Hoenigmann, Managing Director of Proludic, states that while local authority spending cuts have posed a challenge, investment in outdoor facilities delivers clear benefits:

"Research from communities where this scheme has been installed shows that the numbers of people taking part in regular exercise increase by as much as 52%. Increasing participation in sport and physical exercise was promised as a key part of the Games' legacy and with schemes like this we’re helping to keep that promise."

Further information
Information and photos supplied by Proludic.

www.proludic.co.uk

Contact:
Michael Hoenigmann
Managing Director, Proludic
MHOenigmann@proludic.co.uk