

Selected Access & Engagement Evidence

Introduction

Natural England has a selection of evidence that covers the importance of the Natural Environment and the benefits that people get when accessing it. The evidence doesn't cover everything and there are areas that are less certain or open to debate

For example –

We know...

- A lot about where accessible places are (designated land, Open Access Land, Rights of Way etc)
- Not all sections of society access the Natural Environment equally
- There is a relationship between house prices and proximity to greenspace – although this relationship is difficult to quantify.
- Provisioning, supporting and regulating services provided by urban greenspaces are limited and heavily compromised
- Most people visit greenspace close to their own homes – 40% of visits are made within one mile – 66% of visits within two miles & the closer people are to the Natural Environment the more likely they are to visit and engage
- Better health is related to better access to greenspace regardless of other factors

What is currently open to active debate...

- Whether benefits that people get from greenspace are greater where green space is more natural
- the importance of biodiversity in the urban environment to health and well being
- economic value of a quality environment to business and enterprise
- *how* engagement with the Natural Environment leads to behaviour change.

What we don't know...

- The location and distribution of non-designated accessible greenspace
- the extent to which recreation impacts on biodiversity
- the relationship between quality of greenspace and levels of enjoyment
- if green exercise is cost effective at delivering health benefits compared to other interventions

The information above gives a flavour of the kind of evidence we have to show -

- how people use the Natural Environment
- the reasons why they use it
- the benefits individuals get from that use
- the benefits that society gets as a whole

It can all be used to benefit the natural environment through arguing for

- The provision of new natural places
- Improving the management of existing places
- Improving the access to or within natural places for people

Although the evidence may be used to argue specifically for

- addressing inequalities in social / community benefits
- health benefits – both to individuals and to society in terms of health costs
- the mitigation of the effects of climate change mitigation
- other economic reasons such as the increase to house prices close to green places
- to understand how and where people are using places and plan the provision of access to the natural environment accordingly

This evidence includes both our own studies and other peoples work. The main ones are...

- MENE (Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment)
 - This tells us this about where, when, how and why people access the natural environment (and much more)
 - <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/research/mene.aspx>
- MEBIE (micro economic benefits of investing in the Natural Environment)
 - This tells us this about the economic benefits that greenspaces can provide to individuals and society
 - <http://neintranettechnical/content/technical/topics/wiki.asp?PG=2890>
- Mapping tools / information – e.g. MAGIC, Nature on the Map
 - This tells us this where certain green places & spaces are and the socio-economic characteristics of areas
 - <http://www.natureonthemap.naturalengland.org.uk/> and <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/>
- Summary of Health evidence relating to greenspace
 - This is a series of fact sheets produced by the People & Access team that tell us about the health benefits to individuals of the natural environment. It comes from a range of different studies



Health&NaturalEnvironment-Evidencebase

- Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards
 - This is based on research around distances people are prepared to travel to access the natural environment
 - Provides information on desirable sizes of and distances from people that natural greenspace can be provided for.
 - Some local studies have been done such as the work Greenspace south west have been involved in <http://www.ginsw.org.uk/>
- National Ecosystems Assessment. This tells us that
 - Urban greenspace provides lots of cultural services
 - Well managed urban greenspace could make a greatly increased contribution to provisioning, regulating and supporting services
 - <http://uknea.unep-wcmc.org/>



UKNEA-Selectedfacts

- Learning in the Natural Environment
 - This reviews the barriers to schools engaging with the Natural Environment.
 - Review of social and economic benefits and barriers
 - <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/1321181>