

# Research and evaluation



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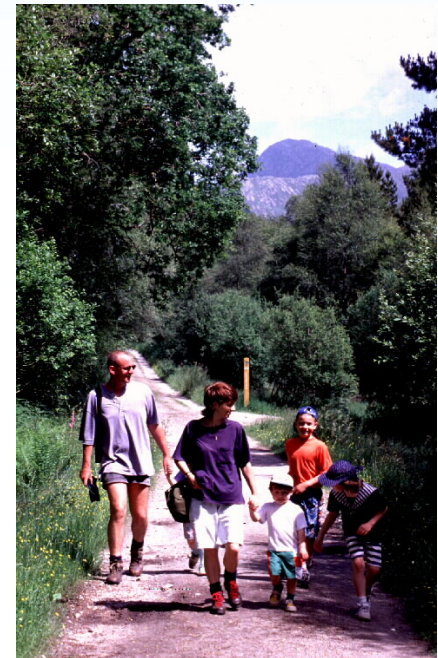
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# West Midlands Woodland Health Project

## Project 2003-2004

- Used the FC Woodland Improvement Grant to deliver more public access and contribute to health and well-being
- 7 projects funded - wide range of partners
- Projects include infrastructure improvements, interpretation, walk programme development, walk leader training, arts projects, launch events, calendar of woodland walks for the Black Country Urban Forest

Funding also made available for 2005-2007



# Post project evaluation

**Methods:** 47 Interviews with organisational representatives  
Attendance at 7 led walks and discussions with participants

## Results

- Only a small number of health professionals interviewed recognised the benefits of woodlands and green space access
- Walk leaders played a key role in enthusing people, acting as a social contact and providing people with a sense of security



Interface NRM Ltd (2004)  
West Midlands Woodland  
and Health Pilot Evaluation

<http://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/fr/INFD-6HCF4N>

Why walkers started walking	What walkers enjoyed
Health concerns Something to do Friendship Rehabilitation Encouragement Better than being in front of television. Scared to walk alone Never considered walking before, until encouraged to do so. Inspirational walk leader Type II diabetes	Feeling fitter Social opportunity Keep my doctor happy It's good to do something active rather than sit at a computer terminal. Losing weight It's good to breathe in the fresh air.



# Chopwell Wood Health Project



# Chopwell Wood Health Project

Chopwell 360 hectare mixed woodland on the border between Gateshead and Derwentside in North East England

- GP referral scheme (Gateshead) - tai chi, cycling, walking, conservation work
- School visits as part of Healthy School Standard (Derwentside)





# Pre and post project evaluation

**Methods:** Questionnaires to school pupils and staff pre and post woodland sessions, focus groups with teachers and with GP referrals, on site survey of woodland users

## Results:

- 33 referrals to Chopwell and 91% completed the 13 week programme
- A further 128 got involved in activities encouraged by project leader
- 6 people bought bicycles indicating a lifestyle change
- 229 children and a number of staff made 4 visits each to wood
- Significant increase in percentage of children regarding the wood as a 'healthy place' post project from 74% to 87%
- Increase in number of visits to the wood by pupils and their families post project from 35% to 42%
- 99% of visitors in survey felt that visiting Chopwell Wood has a positive impact on their health and well-being

**Snowdon, H** (2006) Evaluation of the  
Chopwell Wood Health Project  
[www.forestresearch.gov.uk/chopwellhealth](http://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/chopwellhealth)





# Active England Programme



- Big Lottery Funding managed by Sport England
- Five woodland projects - aim to encourage under presented groups to become more active
  - Haldon Forest (Devon)
  - Bedgebury (Kent)
  - Rosliston (National Forest)
  - Great Western Community Forest (Wiltshire)
  - Greenwood Community Forest (Nottinghamshire)

Running from 2005-2008



## Work being undertaken

- Infrastructure - improvements, new trails, play areas for children, free ride areas
- Outreach work to bring in local communities
- Events and activities to attract new audiences
- Monitoring and evaluation of activities:
  - on site surveys of visitors (1,700 questionnaires so far)
  - catchment profiles
  - qualitative work with those who use and those who do not use the sites

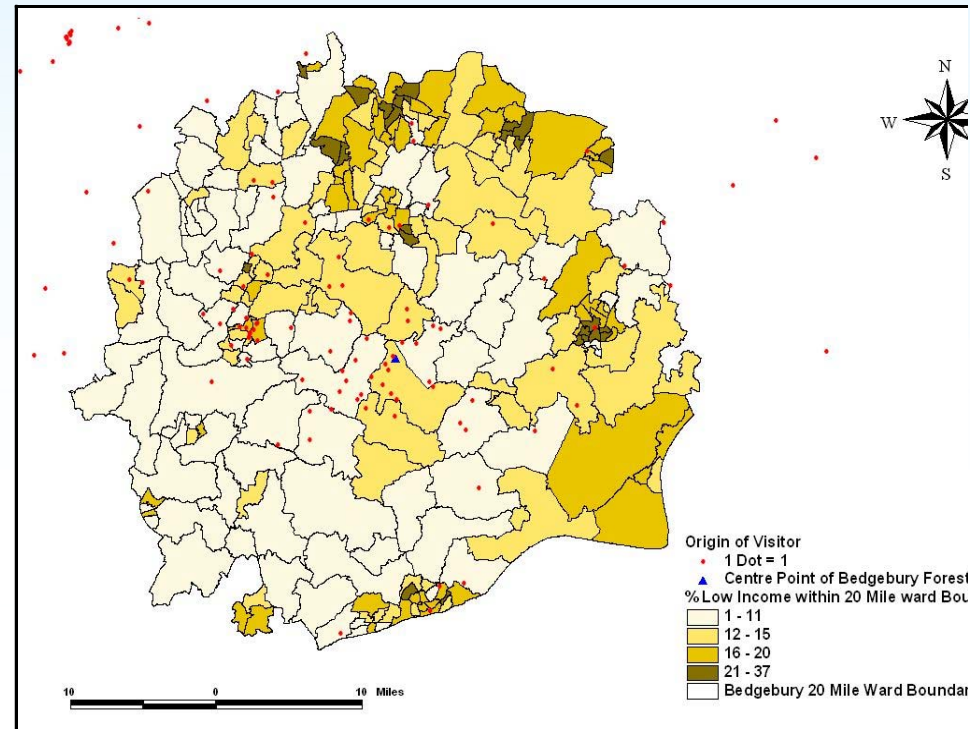
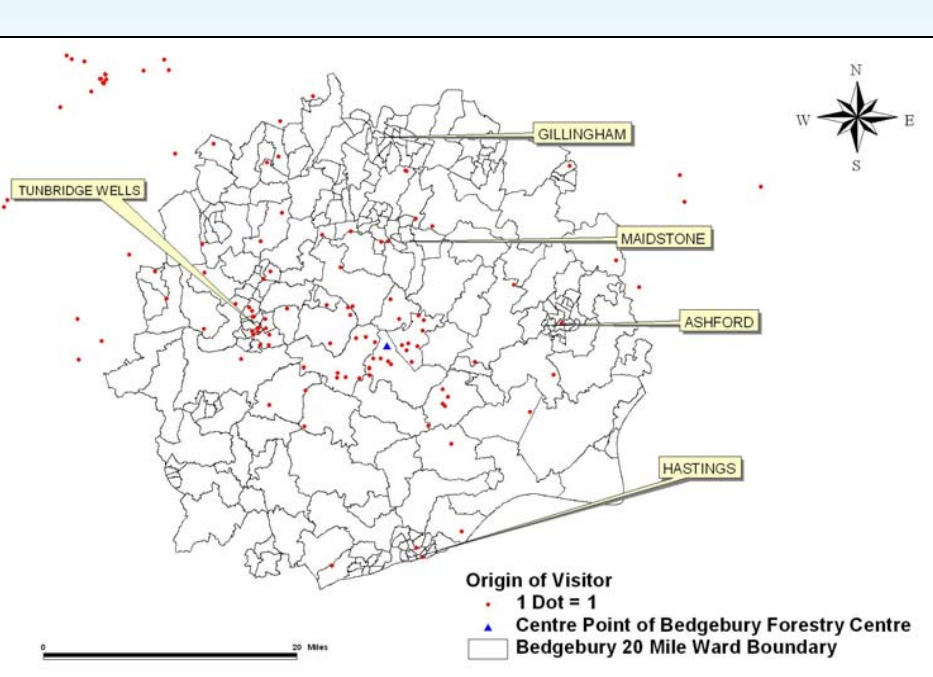
For interim information

<http://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/website/forestresearch.nsf/ByUnique/INFD-6W8KLM>





# Bedgebury Forest - Kent



Post code data from the on site survey is used to map where visitors are coming from in relation to Bedgebury

This is then combined with census data to explore for example whether visitors are coming from low income wards

# Forestry for People study

2006-2008 - Project carried out for Forestry Commission Scotland

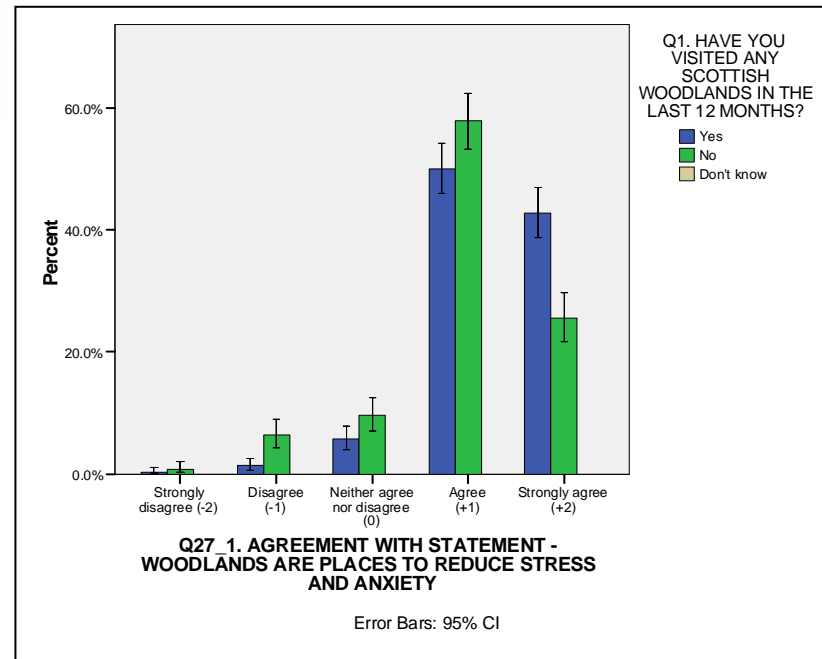
Survey of 1,015 representative sample of Scottish population

- Health theme - Interim results

- 87% strongly agreed/agreed that woods are places to reduce stress and anxiety
- 82% strongly agreed/agreed that woods are places to exercise and keep fit
- 60% did less than 5 days of exercise per week
- 9% who visited woods in the past 12 months exercised on 5 or more days a week in woodlands
- 12% who visited woods in the past 12 months exercised on 3-4 days a week in woodland

Hislop et al 2006. Interim report

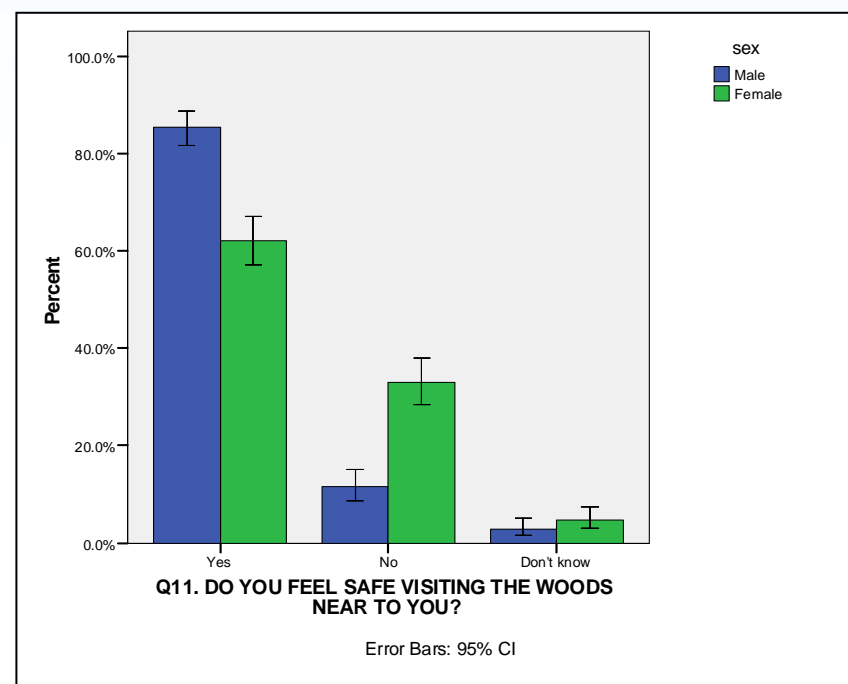
<http://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/fr/INFD-6S8CSP>



# Forestry for People study

## Health theme - Interim results

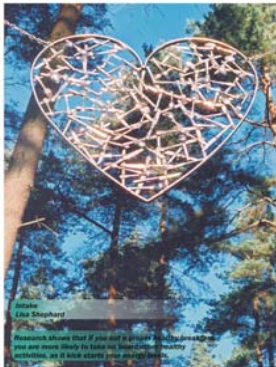
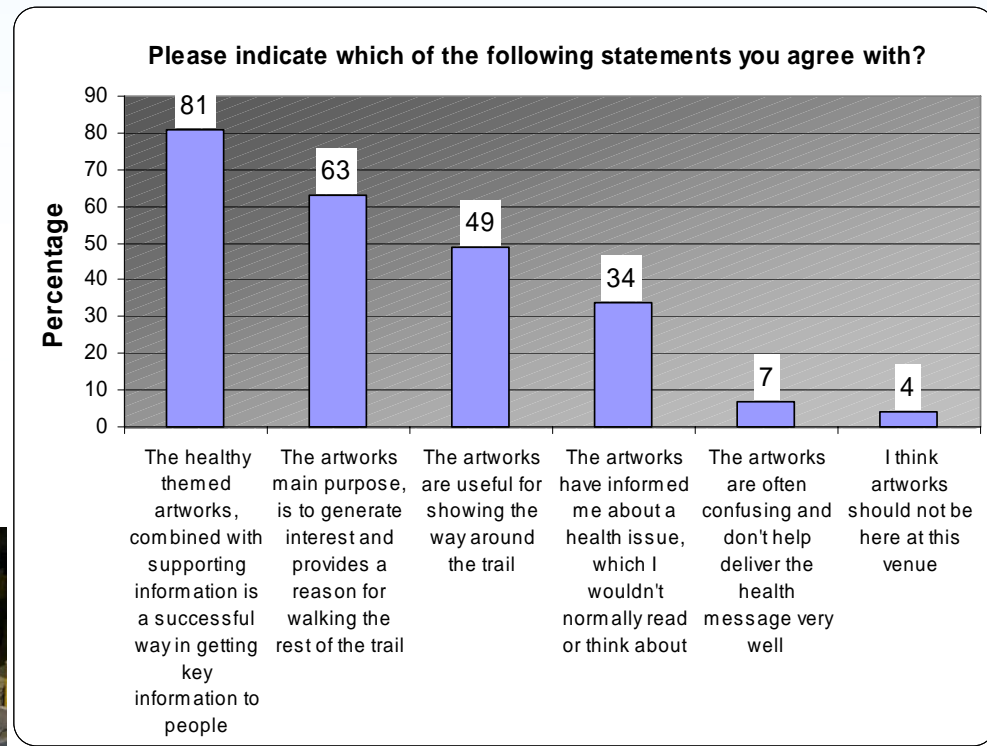
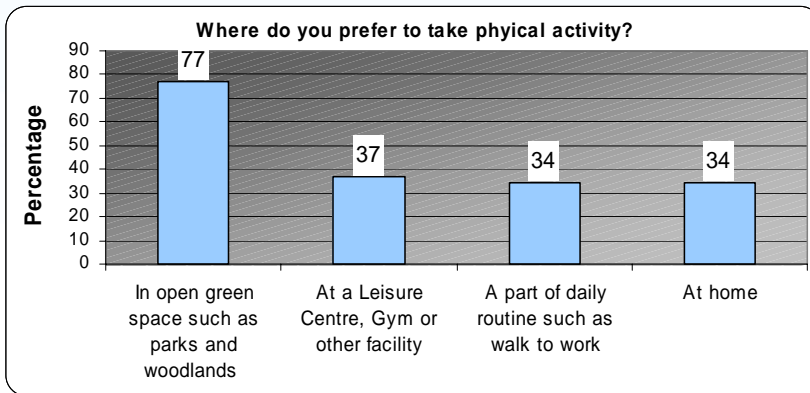
- For 21% of those visiting woodlands, exercising in them was a significant part of their overall exercise regime
- Social group DE were significantly less likely to have woods within a 10 minute walk of where they lived compared to the AB social group
- 22% of those who had woodland within a ten minute walk did not feel safe visiting woods
- women were more likely to feel unsafe than men





# Route to health

- 1 mile community arts trail created in Cannock Chase forest
- Local organisations and individuals worked with artists to create art inspired by important health issues
- Survey of 189 users of the trail in 2005
- 28% had or knew of someone who had taken part in creating the work



# Some Key lessons

## For evaluation

- Ensure monitoring and evaluation is embedded into projects/interventions from the beginning
- Pre and post evaluation is needed - including a baseline in order to assess changes
- Longitudinal research - go back after the end of the project to see if activity is maintained in the long term

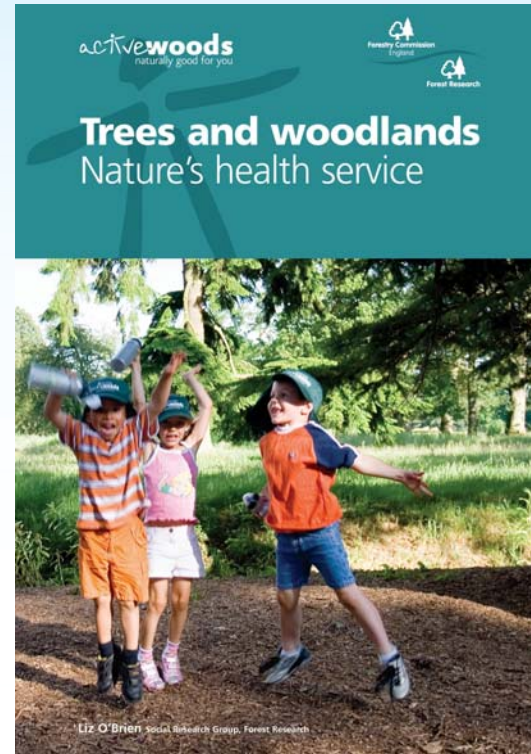
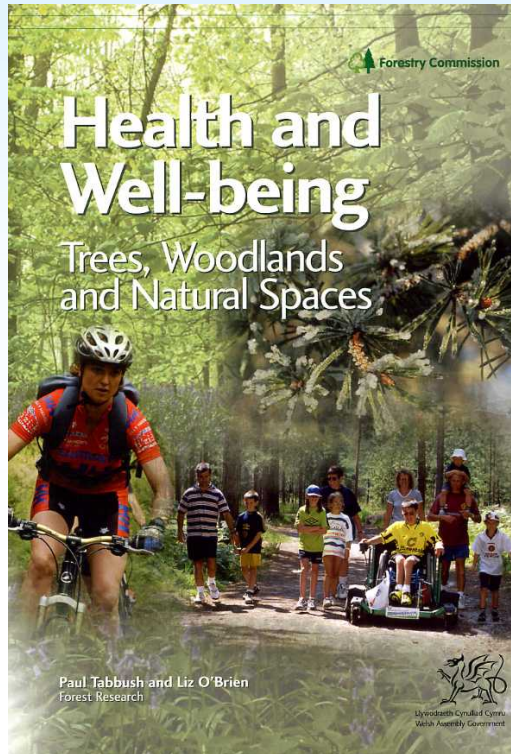
## For projects/initiatives

- Bring together partners from an early stage so that each organisation can meet some of its own targets
- Use creative solutions to enthuse people and change behaviour
- A project leader can act as a focus and motivator to get a project up and running
- Involve volunteers or train people to become volunteers in the project
- Publicise the project and its findings





# Forest Research publications and articles



O'Brien, E. 2004. Feeling good in the woods. Green Places, Issue 07, July/August, pp.22-24.

O'Brien, E. 2006. 'Strengthens heart and mind': using woodlands to improve mental and physical well-being. Unasylva 57: 56-61.

O'Brien, E. Greenland, M and Snowdon H. 2006. Using woodlands and woodland grants to improve public health. Scottish Forestry 60, 2: 18-24.

## Links between nature and health: Key reviews

- Pretty J, Griffin M, Peacock J, Hine R, Sellens M and South N, **A countryside for Health and Well-Being: The Physical and Mental Health Benefits of Green Exercise** Report for the CRN, February 2005
- Bird W, **Natural Fit - Can Green Space and Biodiversity Increase Levels of Physical Activity?** Report for the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, October 2004
- Henwood K, **Exploring the linkages between the environment and health: Is there a role for environmental and countryside agencies in promoting benefits to health?** A report for the Forestry Commission. February 2001
- Rhode C and Kendle A, **Human well-being, natural landscapes and wildlife in urban areas. A review** English Nature Science, No 22, 1994

