

# Community Introductions

Engaging new audiences in enjoying  
Scotland's special places for nature





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## All of nature for all of Scotland

**Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) aims to facilitate enjoyment of the outdoors for everyone in Scotland.**

This report provides information on the **Community Introductions** programme. This was developed to support the implementation of the SNH policy statement, 'Enjoying the Outdoors - Increasing Participation, Sharing the Benefits'.

In this statement, SNH recognises and champions the importance of enjoying the outdoors to people's health and quality of life. Working with a range of national and local partners, we want to increase the number of people and communities who enjoy these benefits, thus supporting the Scottish Government's strategic objectives for a Wealthier and Fairer, Healthier, Safer and Stronger, Smarter and Greener Scotland.

As well as increasing the number of adults and young people who visit the outdoors at least once a week or more, we also want to ensure that these benefits are shared equally by all of Scotland's people. The **Community Introductions** programme is an exciting example of the targeted activity required to deliver this aim.

**“Our day was wonderful, we got to know both Scotland and each other better. People have gained new friends and confidence to explore Scotland on their own!”**

British Red Cross Refugee  
Orientation Service  
Visit to Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park

# Community Introductions

The **Community Introductions** programme was designed to introduce community groups nationwide to some of Scotland's special places for nature.

The programme focused on engagement of people within black and minority ethnic communities. Places visited included National Nature Reserves, National Parks, Regional, Country and Woodland Parks as well as other areas of our countryside and coast actively managed for people and nature.

**Community Introductions** involved 170 participants through a series of coordinated sessions, 11 in total, across Scotland, between March and July 2010. The programme invitation generated high levels of interest with over 25 community groups applying to be involved. Places were limited and 12 groups took part. These included family groups, women's groups, faith groups, retired people, businessmen, students, community groups and minority ethnic support organisations. Visits had between 6 and 32 people and included adults and children. A wide range of ethnic groups was represented, with Chinese, African, Iranian, Indian, Pakistani, Nepalese, Turkish and Malaysian participants enjoying an introduction to one of Scotland's special places for nature.

The programme was delivered by Backbone and was funded by Scottish Natural Heritage and the Forum for Environmental Volunteering Activity (FEVA).

British Red Cross Refugee Orientation Service -  
Visit to Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park

## Aims

**Use the powerful influence of nature to make a positive difference to the lives of black and minority ethnic (BME) communities.**

- Introduce BME community groups to Scotland's special places for nature and show what they have to offer in terms of:
  - Opportunities for shared fun and positive experiences
  - Physical and mental wellbeing
  - Social inclusion and interaction
  - Education and development
  - Recreation
  - Access to open spaces
- Introduce BME community groups to host organisations and ranger services to support and encourage future visits to the outdoors
- Inspire participants to visit special places for nature with others in their communities
- Overall, to increase participation of BME communities in enjoying the outdoors



# Delivery

Sessions were devised to develop participants' confidence in the outdoors and offer opportunities for social interaction and team building, while providing a fun and informative day out. Groups learned new things about nature and about the special features of the place they visited. Key nature and environmental messages were included such as the Scottish Outdoor Access Code and National Nature Reserves communications campaign.

Host organisations played a vital role in each community group's overall experience, providing a warm welcome, guided walks and other activities. Groups were given details of how to visit the site again, plus information on forthcoming events and activities. Information was also provided on other local sites and ranger-supported activities, providing a pathway to participation.

Delivery was tailored to suit each group. Some visits were primarily social outings, a rare day out of the city to enjoy nature and companionship. For others, the visit was part of a personal development programme, using the outdoor environment as a powerful medium for learning and self-discovery.

## Individual and community benefits included:

- Development of personal experiences in the outdoors
- Enjoying nature close to home
- Gaining new knowledge and confidence
- An information pack with details on other places to visit

Public transport was utilised wherever possible – with many community groups unaware of how easily accessible many locations and sites were.

Community Organisation for Race Equality -  
Visit to Pentland Hills Regional Park





# Session planner

Date - 2010	Destination	Community Group	Host Organisation
12 March	Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park	British Red Cross Refugee Orientation Service; Hindu Community Cohesion Group, Glasgow	Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park
13 March	Kinnoull Hill Woodland Park	Nepal Scotland Association, Perth	None
13 April	Pentland Hills Regional Park	Community Organisation for Race Equality, Edinburgh	Pentland Hills Ranger Service
16 April	Clyde Valley Woodlands National Nature Reserve	Bridges Programmes, Glasgow	Scottish Natural Heritage
25 April	Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park	FRAE Fife, Kirkcaldy	Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park
9 May	Glen Tanar National Nature Reserve	Nepal Scotland Association, Aberdeen	Glen Tanar Ranger Service
21 June	Inverewe Gardens	Scottish Highlands & Islands and Moray Chinese Association, Highland	National Trust for Scotland
23 June	Lord Ancrum's Wood	Shakti Women's Aid, Edinburgh	Forestry Commission Scotland
25 June	Tentsmuir National Nature Reserve	Dundee International Women's Centre - Outreach Translation Service	Scottish Natural Heritage
26 June	Beinn Eighe National Nature Reserve	Nepal Association Scotland, Inverness	Scottish Natural Heritage
4 July	Inchcolm Island	Edinburgh Hindu Mandir and Cultural Centre	Historic Scotland

**“I’ve lived here all my life and didn’t know such beauty was on our doorstep ...”**

Dundee International Women's Centre  
Visit to Tentsmuir National Nature Reserve

**“This has been the best!  
Loved being out with everyone together. Look at all this nature!”**

Nepal Scotland Association  
Visit to Kinnoull Hill Woodland Park

# Case Study

## Clyde Valley Woodlands National Nature Reserve visit

**Bridges Programmes** provide refugees and asylum seekers in Glasgow with skills development and work experience to help them into long-term employment. A group of six Bridges participants took part in a Community Introductions visit to Cleghorn Glen, part of the Clyde Valley Woodlands National Nature Reserve. The group enjoyed a guided walk led by SNH and for some this was their first opportunity to explore the Scottish countryside after two or three years living in Glasgow. There was much talk of childhood experiences in the outdoors. The visit also included trust and team-building activities designed to support the Bridges personal development programme, such as exploring the woods blindfolded. Participants left the woods with a commitment to plan and run a return visit for Bridges Programmes staff.

**“Time out of the city, thinking time and fun together. For some it was such a powerful day – providing space and reflection time to make sense of their lives and where they are going.”**

Bridges Programmes - Visit to Clyde Valley  
Woodlands National Nature Reserve

Bridges Programmes staff





# Case Study

## Tentsmuir

### National Nature Reserve visit

**Dundee International Women's Centre Outreach Translation Service** is a support organisation for BME women in Dundee, providing help with correspondence and a range of other needs. This was the largest Community Introductions group, with 32 Asian women and children visiting Tentsmuir National Nature Reserve. The group enjoyed a walk through the forest and a talk about Tentsmuir's wildlife with staff from SNH and Forestry Commission Scotland. And then the beach was revealed! Some explored the sands with a nature detective quiz, others wanted simply to enjoy the place, collecting shells, sitting in the sun. There was paddling in the sea, watched only by the Tentsmuir seals, and then a sumptuous picnic was shared in the sun. A number of women from the group have made independent return visits with their families and the group is hoping to arrange sessions with their women's walking group.

**"I was a wee bit apprehensive about the visit and unsure of protocols when dealing with visitors from Asian and Middle Eastern cultures – but this was dispelled in no time"**

Dundee International Women's Centre -  
Visit to Tentsmuir National Nature Reserve

Tentsmuir National Nature Reserve staff



# Feedback

**“The first day of my life out of Glasgow. I really loved the trip, made friends with rangers, met different people from around the world. What a nice day.”**

British Red Cross Refugee  
Orientation Service  
Visit to Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park

**“This day has helped me to know everyone and for my children to make new friends and not feel so lonely”**

Nepal Scotland Association  
Visit to Beinn Eighe National Nature Reserve



Above  
Nepal Scotland Association -  
Visit to Kinnoull Hill Woodland Park

Left  
Nepal Scotland Association -  
Visit to Beinn Eighe National Nature Reserve



**“A day out of work – explore a new area and take this experience back to family and friends”**

FRAE Fife  
Visit to Loch Lomond and The Trossachs  
National Park

**“It is so peaceful... no shouting, arguing ... it's natural”**

Shakti Women's Aid  
Visit to Lord Ancrum's Wood

**“Being by the sea and in the fresh air. Friendliness of everyone.”**

Scottish Highlands & Islands & Moray  
Chinese Association  
Visit to Inverewe Gardens





Bridges Programmes -  
Visit to Clyde Valley Woodlands National Nature Reserve

**“We don’t know where to go! Unless  
someone will show me ... and then  
it’s fantastic!”**

Edinburgh Hindu Mandir and Cultural Centre  
Visit to Inchcolm Island

**“We know we can call the rangers to  
support us and help us do more”**

Nepal Scotland Association  
Visit to Glen Tanar National Nature Reserve

**“For all nice people, thank you for a  
nice trip with lovely nature”**

British Red Cross Refugee  
Orientation Service  
Visit to Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park

# Outcomes

Measures of success were monitored through:

- Post visit evaluation questionnaires with community groups and host organisations
- Backbone evaluation reports on each visit
- Interviews with participants
- Postcard statements
- Photography
- Follow up evaluation questionnaires six months later with community groups and hosts

## Community groups

Many of the community groups encountered difficulties when arranging a visit outdoors. These included determining what to do, lack of confidence in leading a group and transport issues.

Main reasons for nomination to the **Community Introductions** programme included wanting to learn about nature, enjoy a fun day out with their group and discover a place they could revisit with their families.

All groups thoroughly enjoyed their visit. Activities varied for each session however much focused on walking, learning about the site and the nature there, time to play with children and having lunch together.

Meeting the rangers at each site was integral to the success of the project. Many participants commented on how friendly and approachable the host staff were.

**Community organisations** reported benefits in:

- understanding the value of the outdoors to their group
- discovering places to go and things to go
- knowing who to contact to arrange future visits
- increased confidence in leading their group outdoors

For their groups, the visit had been an opportunity for increased social interaction, physical activity and learning. The day had increased their confidence and improved their perception of the outdoors.

All groups stated that this visit made a difference to how they felt about the outdoors and Scotland's special places for nature. All stated that they would be planning an outdoor trip again soon.



Nepal Scotland Association -  
Visit to Beinn Eighe National Nature Reserve

**Several of the groups returned the places they had visited with Community Introductions – some with their group and some with their families. Groups also went on to visit other outdoor places, sometimes with the support of contacts they had made.**

**“It helped us to establish contacts with rangers as well as having the confidence to organise outings by ourselves”**

**Community Organisation for Race Equality  
Visit to Pentland Hills Regional Park**



## Host organisations

### The Community Introductions programme had a definite impact on reaching new audiences.

All host organisations were very pleased to be involved in the visits. Many stated that not knowing who to approach was a key barrier to working with BME groups. However programmes such as **Community Introductions** provided a way to access BME community groups to show what is available to them. Several hosts noted that the visit had helped them gain confidence in working with different ethnic groups. For many, lack of staff time and resources was a barrier to greater engagement with BME communities. Several hosts are now involved in other Backbone initiatives with this audience.

#### The rangers offered support in:

- How to access different sites
- What each site could offer in terms of activities and ranger-supported sessions
- Activities that groups and individuals could do themselves
- Ideas for activities back in the community to encourage individuals and groups to visit the outdoors
- A friendly face and contact who genuinely made them feel welcome
- Resource for future visits

The project exceeded expectations and challenged any assumptions on BME community engagement with the natural environment in Scotland.

#### We found:

- Demand exceeded opportunities available. The engagement with BME groups was most welcomed and positive feedback was overwhelming.
- Participants were surprised how convenient and cost effective it was to access special places by public transport.
- Host sites were integral to the success of the project. Ranger services were flexible, enthusiastic and approachable and this added to the rewarding experience.
- Community organisation staff welcomed the introduction to a known contact at host sites for support with future activities.

**“The project gave rangers and host staff real connections with BME communities – inspiring confidence and reassurance that they can be themselves and that their approach is effective with BME communities.”**

#### Backbone

Nepal Scotland Association -  
Visit to Kinnoull Hill Woodland Park



## Way forward

Following the success of this programme it is hoped that contact with all groups involved can continue. This programme was limited to just 11 visits and clearly did not meet the demand. Recommendations for this programme to be continued and developed within key urban areas would continue the momentum and build on further SNH partnership work and community engagement. In addition, with extra funding and exploration of partnerships, this programme could be expanded in geographic regions such as Highlands, Islands, Ayrshire, Dumfriesshire and Borders allowing a wide range of minority groups to enjoy the outdoors. An SNH programme is currently being developed to engage BME groups in Glasgow with nature on their doorstep, linked the Simple Pleasures communications campaign. SNH is also funding Backbone to deliver a training programme to develop outdoor leaders in BME community groups.



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**Enjoying the Outdoors Policy Statement**

[www.snh.gov.uk/about-snh/what-we-do/  
health-and-wellbeing/enjoying-the-outdoors/](http://www.snh.gov.uk/about-snh/what-we-do/health-and-wellbeing/enjoying-the-outdoors/)

**SNH Simple Pleasures Campaign**

[www.snh.gov.uk/simplepleasures](http://www.snh.gov.uk/simplepleasures)



**Scottish Natural Heritage**  
**Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba**

All of nature for all of Scotland  
Nàdar air fad airson Alba air fad

