

Collaborating for sustainability

Gareth Field tells us about the National Trust's Active Outdoor Providers Scheme (AOPS).

Please can you briefly describe the Active Outdoors Providers Scheme and what it means for outdoor providers?

This scheme helps National Trust teams on the ground to work with outdoor providers to develop a shared responsibility for looking after the special places that we all use and want to look after. This scheme aims to cover everything from a single walk leader to large mass-participation events. It aims to develop a collaborative approach to achieve appropriate and sustainable use of venues through developing local relationships that make a difference to the sites.

How is implementation going?

We have trained a team of regional leads across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This team will be delivering a training session to individual properties during spring and summer 2019. Each property will look at what it means for them at each particular venue and develop relationships with the users of the venues. This development of relationships will take time but be worthwhile in the long term.

Have you faced any particular challenges and how are these being addressed?

Understandably, providers and properties have been wanting definitive answers straight away, but the scheme is about developing relationships and finding answers together. This takes time and local knowledge from both sides.

Although it will take time for our properties to get up to speed with this scheme, hopefully the roll out of the training will help and working with IOL and AHOEC has been helping develop these relationships with the providers regionally.

What advice would you share with providers, about the scheme and its implementation?

Build a relationship with your local National Trust teams, remember that we are only delivering the training this spring so there is no hurry. This process will start slowly and build; it will take time but working together for the sustainable use of venues will be worth it in the long term.

When you talk to the property, ask who the AOPS lead is. The local rangers and teams on the ground are experts on the places they are looking after, they love to share their knowledge of the sites. Learn and understand what they know about the venues as this will help you understand their concerns, if they have any, and will help you share more with your participants about what is special.

Are there any next steps and how can people get involved?

Firstly, learn more about the venues you use and consider the impact of your use and the cumulative effect of all users of that site. Secondly, get in touch with the property that is responsible for the venues you use and build a relationship with their AOPS lead.



Check how the Active Outdoor Providers Scheme (AOPS) applies to you:

Assessing the impact

Will there be any potential damage or disruption? Individually or cumulatively?	Will activities take place inside the pay barrier or use NT facilities?	Does the provider want to bring infrastructure on the land?	Do they want to use land without right of access?	Is consent required from an external protection body?	Are there plans to sell things on a commercial basis (food, drink, etc)?	Any statutory licences (eg music, alcohol) required?	
No to all of these questions							Business as usual
Yes to this question	No to all of these questions						Work together to protect
Yes to any of these questions					No to these questions		Permission for use granted
					Yes to either of these questions		Commercial agreement

The Active Outdoor Providers Scheme (AOPS) in action

CASE STUDY

Box Hill, Surrey

Permission for use granted



Background

The road on Box Hill is owned and managed by the National Trust (it is not a public highway). The site is within cycling distance from London and has become a mecca for cyclists and a popular spot for cycling events – large and small – since being used as a venue in the 2012 Olympics.

Impact on the Trust

Cycle races can seriously impact the experience of other visitors to Box Hill as well as the local community, causing high volumes of traffic, putting pressure on limited resources. The space taken up by the event gazebos also reduces parking income.

Relationship category

With no public right of access to Box Hill, there is a greater risk of liability for events taking place here. We set up a 'permission for use' licence for all event organisers and agreed a pricing structure.

Actions and outcomes

We have communicated the procedure and pricing structure with cycling event organisers so they know permission is required. The income from licences raises around £30,000 a year to fund the ranger team's work. We also control the number of events taking place, helping us maintain good relationships with tenants and the local community.

CASE STUDY

Cathedral Quarry, Cumbria

Work together to protect



Background

This slate quarry in Little Langdale is a favourite venue for individual climbers and activity providers, who regularly use it for climbing abseiling and caving: all high-risk activities.

Impact on the Trust

Cathedral Quarry is open access to the public, with no National Trust presence or infrastructure. It is not actively promoted by the Trust. There is some environmental damage as a result of its use; the local community and tenants are affected by the volume and high frequency of visitors to the quarry.

Relationship category

We have structured a 'Working together to protect' relationship with activity providers, since the quarry is in the open countryside and there are no specific restrictions (ie, SSSI) and participants sign risk waivers with the activity providers. To broker relationships, we have set up a user group with representatives from some of the main providers.

Actions and outcomes

We have worked with the user group to develop:

- An induction explaining our management principles, mutual liabilities and responsibilities, plus some micro volunteering tasks
- A code of conduct
- A way of updating everyone when damage is done.

There is now a much more responsible use of the quarry and it has become a model for similar sites in the area.

AUTHOR: Gareth Field. Gareth's work has always been about inspiring and supporting people to access and love the outdoors, from first days working with primary kids at YMCA Lakeside, to leading multi-day expeditions at Outward Bound and guiding Sea Kayak journeys in Maine. More recently as a Development Officer for British Canoeing and now when working in the Active Outdoors Team for the National Trust, his focus is on making the outdoors accessible for all.

Profile photo courtesy of Mere Mountains

