



# Engaging people in the natural environment ! Anyone missing ?

**Jim Burt**

Principal Adviser

Outdoor Learning and Outdoors for All Programmes

# Context



- Government's ambition '...everyone should have fair access to a good quality natural environment'. (NEWP 2011)
- However '...the opportunities to spend time in the natural environment are currently not open to everyone, and this can contribute to health and other inequalities.' (NEWP 2011).
- The Health and Social Care Act 2012, gives local authorities a duty to reduce health inequalities.
- Natural England is working with partners to provide **evidence** that helps clarify the scale and nature of people's needs, to help improve the quality and targeting of their **services**, to **increase the range** of people experiencing the benefits of the natural environment.

# The Outdoors for All Programme



Three strands of work:

- **Partnership:** National Outdoors for All Working Group

## Membership

- BEN (Black Environment Network), MIND, CNP Mosaic, Disability UK, Disabled Ramblers, Fieldfare Trust, Riding for the Disabled, Age UK, Phoenix Futures,
- Woodland Trust, National Trust, RSPB, The Canal and River Trust,
- DEFRA, Forestry Commission, Environment Agency, English Heritage and HLF

- **Research:** Operational Research Group

## Membership

- Plymouth University
- Essex University
- Nottingham University
- European Centre for the Environment and Human Health
- Forest Research
- Edinburgh University
- Sheffield University

- **Capacity Building Projects** eg. Autism and Nature, Greening Dementia, Care Farming

# Evidence of Health Inequality linked to the Natural Environment



- People living in the most deprived areas are 10 times less likely to live in the greenest areas. Indeed the most affluent 20% of wards in England have 5 times the amount of parks or general green space than the most deprived 10% of wards.
- Overall better health is related to access to green space regardless of socio-economic status. Furthermore, income-related inequality in health is moderated by exposure to green space.
- Older people live longer in areas where there is more green space close to their homes.
- Children who live close to green spaces have higher levels of physical activity and are less likely to experience an increase in BMI over time.

# Trends in Health Inequality



- Despite large investment in addressing health inequalities, the gap in health outcomes between the rich and poor remains the same as it was in 1997.
- Health inequality in England is estimated to cost up to £70 billion each year.

So, increasing the amount and quality of local green space can be part of a low cost package to address health inequalities, improve health and wellbeing outcomes and deliver other social, economic and environmental benefits.

# Background to MENE



- Natural England, Defra and the Forestry Commission commissioned the **Monitoring Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE)** survey in 2009.
- MENE is the most comprehensive dataset available on people's use and enjoyment of the natural environment.  
(“open spaces in and around towns and cities, including parks, canals and nature areas; the coast and beaches; and the countryside - including farmland, woodland, hills and rivers”. A visit could be anything from a few minutes to all day. )
- Over 800 face to face in-home interviews per week or 45,000 interviews per year, representative of the English adult population (aged 16 and over).
- Presentation based on 142,000 interviews between March 2009 & February 2012

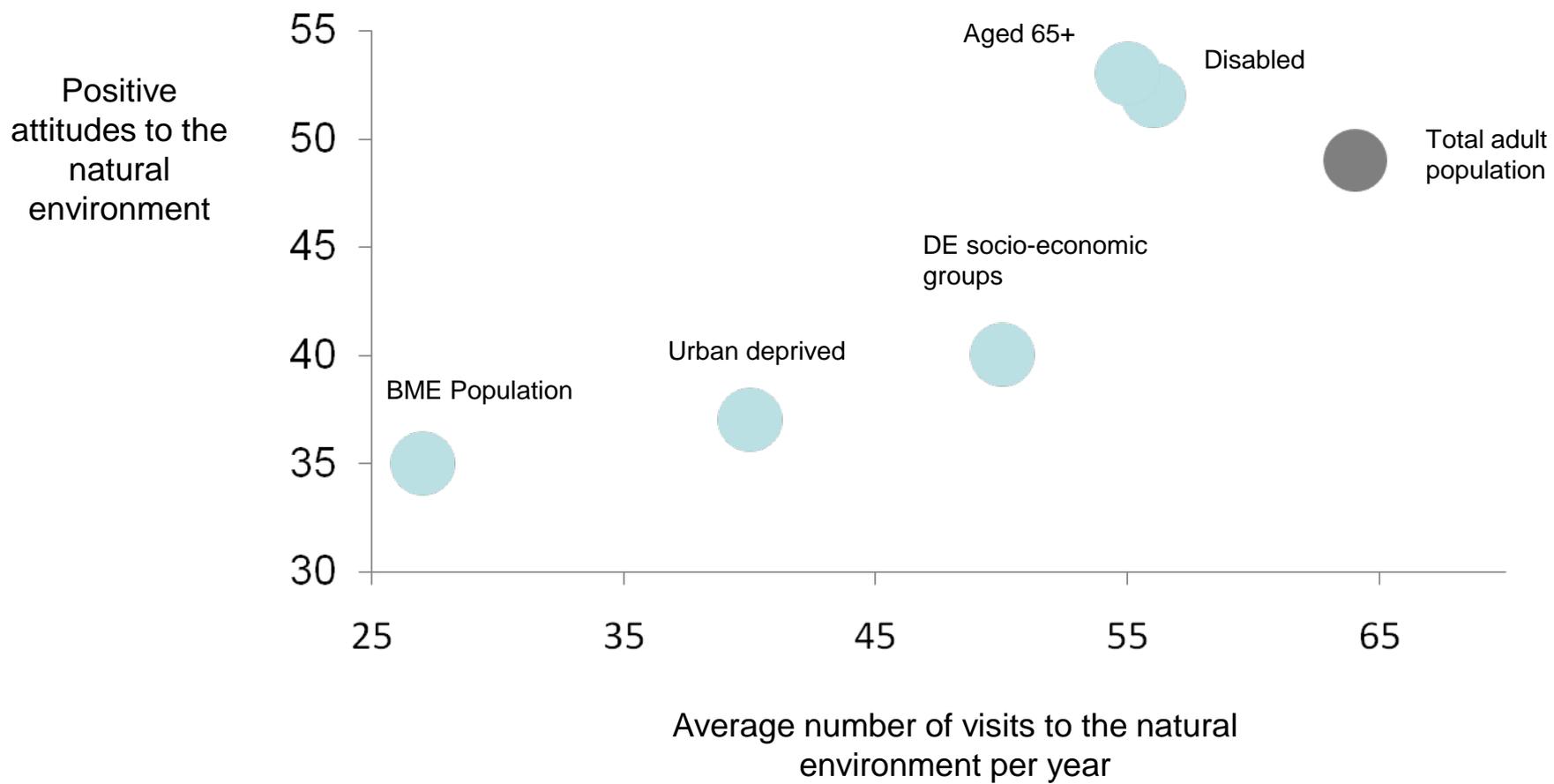
Full details <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/research/mene.aspx>).

# Differences in access to the natural environment amongst social groups

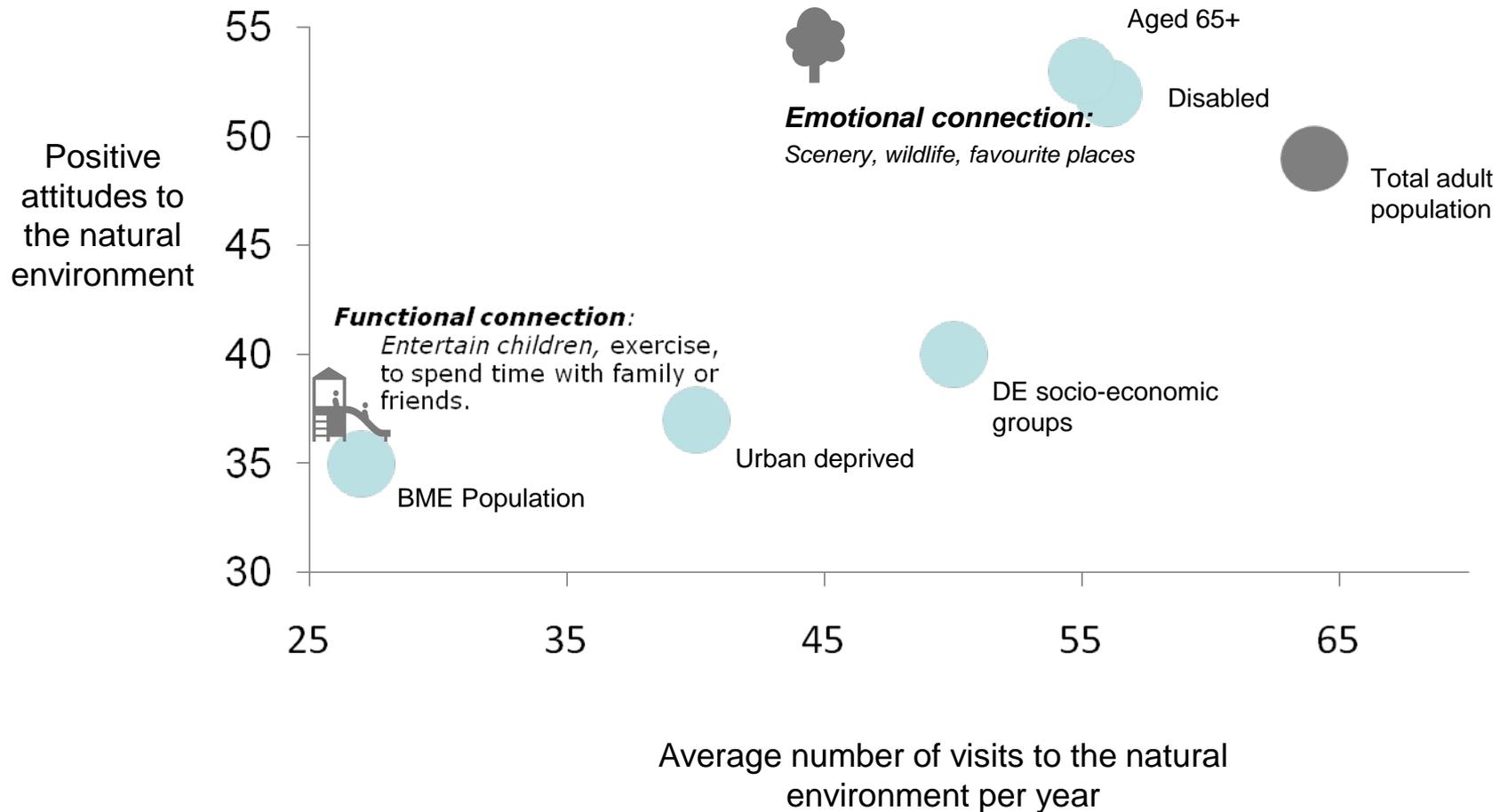


	Average annual visits to the natural environment	Numbers (% millions)
English adult population	64	42 (100%)
BAME population	27	5.4 (13%)
Urban Deprived	40	4.2 (10%)
DE socio-economic group	50	11.5 (28%)
Aged 65+	55	8.1 (19%)
People with disabilities	56	7.4 (18%)

# Access & attitudes



# Access and motivations



# Comparisons

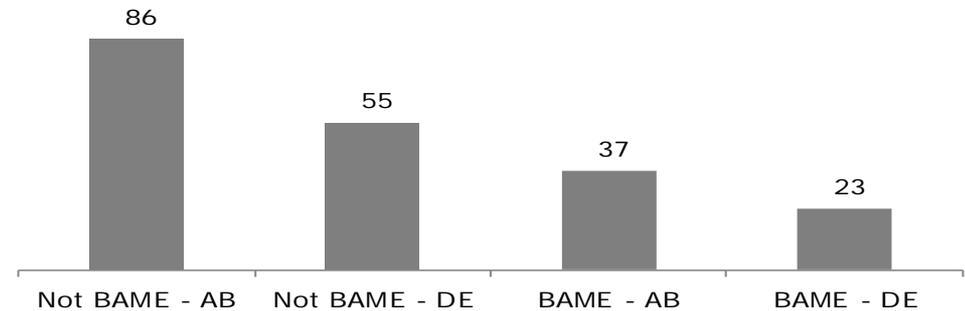
	BME population	Urban deprived population	Total adult population
<b>Average visits per year</b>	27	40	64
<b>Age (%)</b> Under 45	76	60	49
<b>Place of residence (%)</b> Urban	98	100	78
<b>Children in household (%)</b>	43	35	29
<b>Car Ownership (%)</b>	59	52	72
<b>Public transport used for visits (%)</b>	12	6	3
<b>Barriers to taking visits (%)</b> Too busy work Too busy home	32 25	20 16	26 18
<b>Visit destination (%)</b> Urban Countryside or coast	78 22	66 34	39 61
<b>Motivations (%)</b> Health or exercise Entertaining children Enjoy wildlife/nature	32 22 16	26 11 33	36 3 43

# Influence of children on adults use of green space

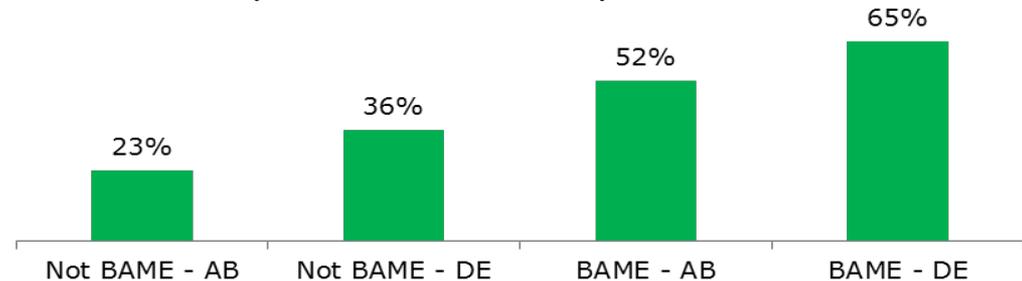


- Adults with children in the non-BAME-AB group take almost 4 times as many visits as those in the BAME-DE group.
- High quality, easily accessible local green spaces are particularly important to households with children in the DE and BAME populations.

Average visits per person per year  
(households with children)



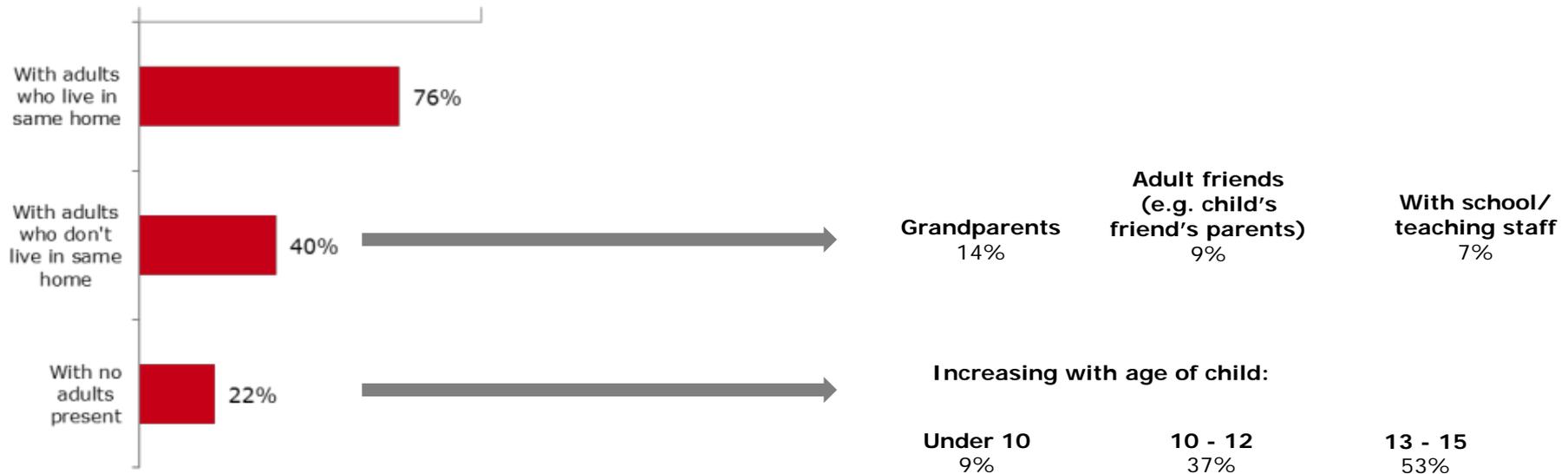
■ Proportion of visits taken to urban parks  
(households with children)



# Who are children visiting the natural environment with?



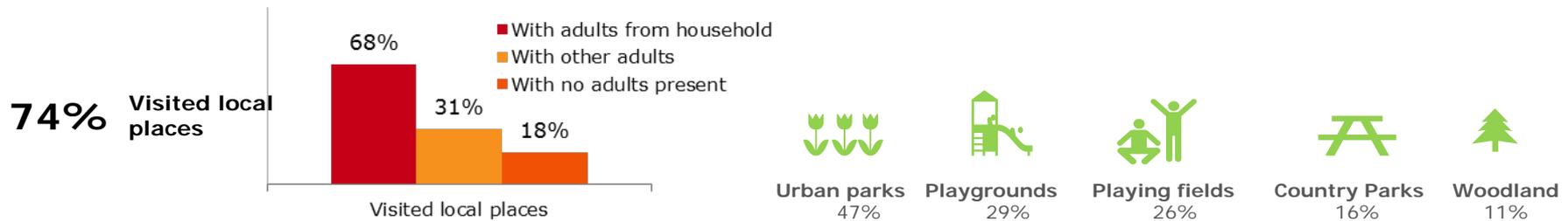
- **69%** of all children normally visit the natural environment at least once a week. This proportion increases to 84% when parents take visits at least weekly.
- In an average month **76%** of children take visits to the natural environment with adults in their households.
- **40%** visit with other adults – most often with grandparents, adult friends or school.
- **22%** of all children take visits where no adults are present – this proportion increases to around half of children in their teens.



# Where are children visiting?



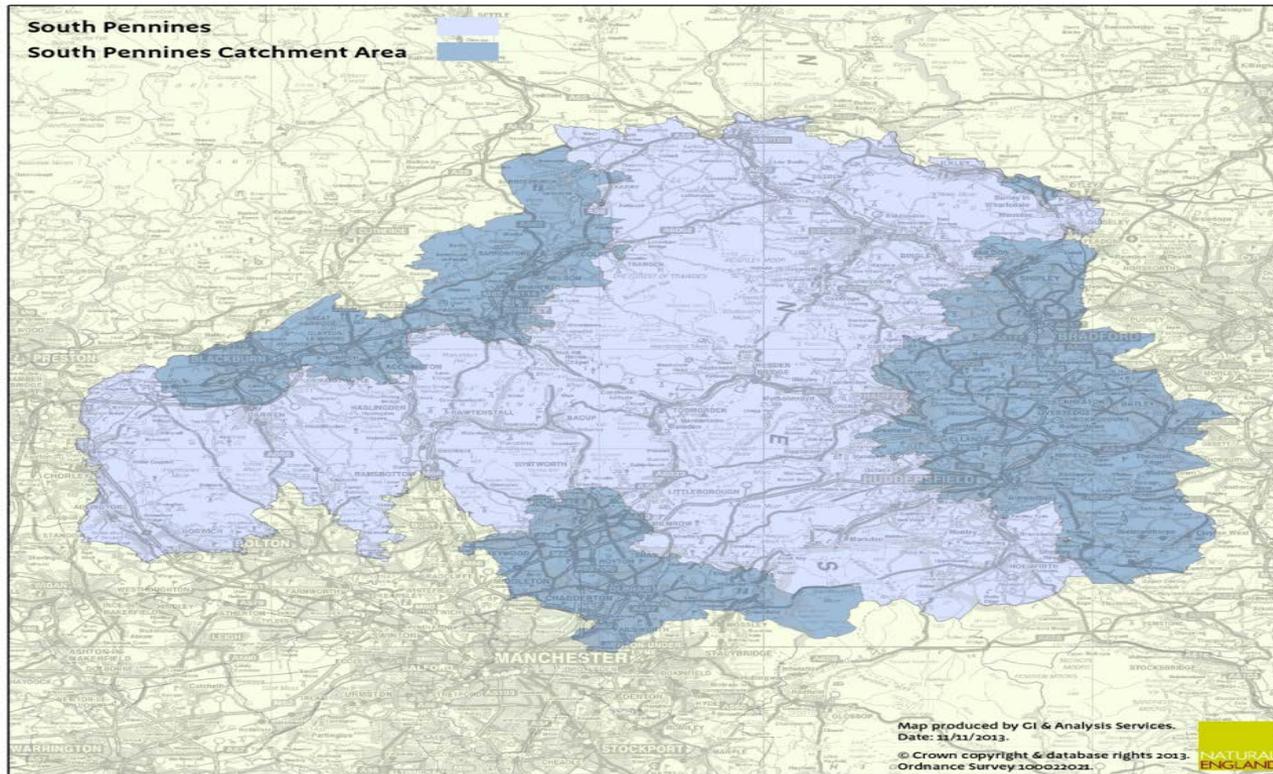
- In an average month, 74% of children visited **local natural places**
- The largest proportions visited ‘managed’ local environments i.e. urban parks, playgrounds and playing fields. (These spaces were particularly important for the lower SEGs and BAME populations.)
- Much lower proportions visited ‘less managed’ local places such as woodland or places further afield.
- Nearly all of those children who took visits without any adults present (either on their own or with other children) took these visits locally.



# South Pennines Local Nature Partnership



- Partnership with the LNP to help shape their public engagement work.
- South Pennines LNP is the distinctive area of uplands between Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire and Pennine Lancashire.



# Key visitor groups



Between 2009-12, an average of 20 million visits were taken per year to places within the South Pennines, by three distinct groups:

- **Residents of the South Pennines:** 7.1 million visits (36%), average of 35 visits per year by each of the c.0.2 million adults living in this area.
- **Residents of the former industrial towns around the South Pennines (Catchment Area):** 3.6 million visits (18%), average of around 3 visits per year by each of the c.1.4m adults.
- **Rest of England:** 9 million visits (46%), large volumes from cities such as Leeds and Manchester.

# Headline findings



- Residents of South Pennines take visits to the natural environment more frequently than residents of the Catchment Area; by a factor of 10. Popl'n of Catchment Area is 20 times larger, latent potential 3.5 to 125 million visits per year.
- Residents of the Catchment Area are more likely than people living in the South Pennines to be in the least affluent SEG, to be members of the BAME population and to live in urban and deprived areas.
- Nearly all of the BAME population from the Catchment Area lived in urban areas (99%) and nearly half (48%) lived in deprived areas.
- For residents of the Catchment Area, frequency of visiting the natural environment is more closely related to SEG than any other demographic. 27% of people from the least affluent SEG had taken a visit to the natural environment in the 7 days prior to interview compared to 48% for the most affluent SEGs.
- Over 50% of visits to the natural environment taken by the least affluent residents of the Catchment Area involved a journey of less than 1 mile, nearly 80% were taken on foot and only 6% of visits were to the South Pennines, whilst a third (32%) of visits included an urban park and 16% a Country Park.

# Summary



- Large parts of the English population remain under represented in the natural environment.
- Millions of people in the English adult population (BAME population, residents of urban deprived areas and DE socio-economic group) visit the natural environment less than once a week, and
- Around 8 million people, or 20%, visit little more than once a fortnight (BME population, residents of urban deprived areas) - 40% less than the average for the English adult population.
- Government's ambition '...everyone should have fair access to a good quality natural environment' remains critically important but a serious long term challenge for the natural environment sector.

# Conclusion



## ***“To Change Behaviour You Have To Engage A Person”***

To meet this challenge, we must be ambitious and scale up our activities by continuing to work together, be responsive to the users of our services, be creative in our solutions, and fearless in our outreach to new audience.



# Thank You



## **For more information:**

Published MENE Reports and more details on the survey methods are on the Natural England website:

[www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/evidence/mene](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/evidence/mene)

## **Outdoors for All Programme**

Contact: Sarah Preston, Senior Adviser, Outdoors for All.

[sarah.preston@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:sarah.preston@naturalengland.org.uk). Tel 0300 060 0523

# Five Key Groups



## **BAME population**

- 18,220 people of the Black and Minority Ethnic Population

## **Elderly population**

- 35,054 people aged 65 years and over

## **Disabled population**

- 29,716 people with a long term illness or disability

## **D&E socio-economic groups**

- 48,478 people including semi and unskilled workers and long term unemployed

## **Urban deprived population**

- 15,906 residents of areas in the bottom 10% of the Index of Multiple Deprivation AND in areas defined as Urban using the ONS Rural-Urban classification.