

# MEMBERS' NEWS

NOVEMBER 2006

- **Conservation**
- **Recreation**
- **Community Inclusion**

**COUNTRYSIDE  
MANAGEMENT  
ASSOCIATION**

[www.countryside.org.uk](http://www.countryside.org.uk)

## Enjoying the Outdoors – connecting to the natural environment

*By Andy Maginnis*

Natural England recently invited CMA to comment on its draft outdoor recreation strategy, “Enjoying the outdoors – connecting with the natural environment.” Where time permits, the Executive seeks the views of the wider membership before responding to consultations, however, in some instances (this being a case in point) this is not possible.

CMA’s response encouraged Natural England to remain focused on its general purposes (promoting nature conservation, protecting biodiversity, conserving and enhancing the landscape, securing the provision and improvement of for the study understanding and enjoyment of the natural environment, promoting access to the countryside and open spaces, encouraging open air recreation and contributing in other ways to social and economic well-being through the management of the natural environment) as these are more readily understood than their strategic outcomes. Amongst other things, the response also pointed out the contribution made by local authorities in terms of Natural England meeting its strategic outcomes and the current pressures that public sector budgets are under.

## The Delivery of Countryside Management in England

*By Andy Maginnis*

Natural England has recently published a review of countryside management services in England commissioned by the Countryside Agency and conducted by Sheffield Hallam University. The review charts the history of countryside management services and on the whole reports the concept of countryside management and those delivering it as successful. It recognises the valuable role of such services and acknowledges the positive way in which services have adapted to changing government agendas. Naturally the report points out that despite their valuable role, in recent years most countryside services have suffered financially or been disbanded. You can find a copy of the report at –

<http://www.countryside.gov.uk/LAR/Landscape/CIAT/to>

[wns/research/Delivery\\_of\\_Countryside\\_Management\\_in\\_England.asp](http://www.countryside.gov.uk/wns/research/Delivery_of_Countryside_Management_in_England.asp)

## US Fact Finding Tour

*By Kevin Vigars, North Regional Chair*

Following my wonderful time and speaking to conference delegates on a small aspect of my work, community involvement, at the recent IRFC Conference in Scotland. I was invited on a fact finding tour by the United States National Park Service (USNPS) to look at the management practices being carried out (or not as the case may be) and to discuss involving communities as part of the management, something the USNPS admits has not been on the radar for many years.

I took up the invite, with the full support of my employers, and went on a four-day visit to look at the work being undertaken by the USNPS, within the Essex National Heritage Area in late October. I also took the opportunity to go further south and visit the Everglades National Park in Florida. When I first arrived it seemed strange to see Manchester and Gloucester (home of the boats that were lost in the “Perfect Storm”) being located in Essex County – can’t really blame the Americans though because we were the first to arrive, seeking a new future!



The USNPS, created in 1916 was set up to manage 37 units embracing six million acres. Today the Park Service is charged with preserving 390 units covering 84 million acres in 49 States and welcomes nearly 300 million visitors

annually and its remit is so diverse, compared with the National Park Service in this country. At present the USNPS is responsible for the management of National Historic Sites and Battlefield sites to name a few (work undertaken by English Heritage in the UK). Additionally the Service is responsible for the management of state parks and recreation areas, as they class them (work undertaken by Natural England in the UK). During my time in Essex County I was taken to see two National Historic Sites at Saugus Iron Works and Salem Maritime (home of the famous witch hunts).



Over the four days it became apparent that under funding has become more acute as the number and type of parks have grown. The USNPS report annual budget shortfalls in recent years have run to about half a million dollars, and the fiscal 2006 operating budget represented an increase, adjusted for inflation, of only about one percent. So we may all be in the same situation in relation to financial resources – but on this scale!!!



It also became apparent that the USNPS has a long way to go in getting the support of the communities. This is developing with the work being carried out by the Essex National Heritage Area team (similar set up to AONB's but without the legislative support) in "connecting communities". This work has seen partnerships develop across the board, with local residents and Government departments. However, I felt it was a token gesture as the Heritage Areas set up has a short life span and has no real Governmental or financial support to assist or develop any of the work on the ground – they rely totally on the good will of the public and landowners – something not forthcoming – seems a similar picture to some of our work.



It wasn't all "fact finding", the staff of the USNPS in Essex arranged for me to go South and visit the Everglades, would be a shame not to as I was in the "area" for a wedding. Whilst touring around with National Park Staff I had a close shave during a boat trip. There was one terrifying moment when a full-grown male alligator tried to get on the boat! The guys just shooed it off with a stick like it was an every day occurrence. Apparently, because of building pressure and South Florida's population growth on the edge of the Everglades the alligators are going into the nearby communities more and more frequently as it's an easy feed for them. But there have been several human deaths this year as a consequence.



Overall I had a great time, getting a totally different perspective on how the environment and heritage is managed in the States. It did seem ironic that the Americans were the first to establish the National Parks system and they led the way for everyone else at the time. However, under funding has become more acute as the number and type of parks have grown. It has given me more confidence to know that we all get limited financial support for our work.

Additionally, the differences are surprising, for instance although we deal with the community a lot here and involve them in our work it's the opposite in the States. Although they led the way with National Parks all those years ago, they need to catch up to us now.

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## **Regional Round Up**

### **Home Counties & East Anglia**

*By Gary King*

The regional committee meeting and study day was held on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> December at Milton Country Park in Cambridge. The study day was about the Green Flag Award, what it is and how to apply it and what the judges score on. Plus the benefits it can bring to your site. 16 people attended and a date was set for the next study day and regional meeting at Stanwick Lakes for the 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2007.

Another recent training day was held on 16<sup>th</sup> October at Whitlingham Country Park in Norwich, Norfolk, on dangerous trees and recreation of a broad from a gravel pit. 15 people attended the day.

I would like to remind members that we need articles for the regional newsletter, otherwise we have to send out blank pieces of paper which is of no interest to anyone! So please have a think about what you could write about, then do it and send it in.

### **South West Region**

*By Richard Eales*

At a meeting on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> November, which was generously hosted by Tim Green at Queenswood Country Park in Herefordshire, the South West Committee had a long discussion with Ian Bamforth and Andy Maginnis about the CMA at a national level and produced actions on how we could further help to promote the CMA both regionally and nationally.

Future training events were also discussed and dates are in the process of being confirmed.

Minutes of future committee meetings will be circulated to the SW Region members.

Adrian Shaw is standing down as County Rep for Cornwall, I would like to express my thanks for all of Adrian's hard work towards the CMA.

I would like to remind members that please wherever possible try and recruit members. The Committee are working on ways to further increase membership and promote the CMA as a professional body to represent all staff working in conservation, but we are only as strong as our wider membership.

If anyone would like to get more involved then please contact me (details on back page) as we are missing County Reps for a few areas including Somerset and now Cornwall. If you would like to see what goes on then please come along to a committee meeting, our next one is 7<sup>th</sup> February 2007 at Crickley Hill Country Park.

A few training events have recently taken place – Fire, Friend or Foe (Swaling Training) took place on 11<sup>th</sup> October at Halsway Manor. Hosted by the Quantock Hills AONB and Exmoor National Park Authority, the training day was very well attended (26 people). The Committee wish to thank both ENPA and the Quantock Hills AONB for hosting the training.

And the Navigation Training was hosted by Dartmoor National Park Authority on the 15<sup>th</sup> November. The Committee would like to thank Ella Briens for organising the event. I have received very positive feedback about the day and apparently the weather was perfect, visibility being extremely poor.

For upcoming training events please check the Sou'Wester newsletter and the CMA website, as dates have yet to be confirmed. Failing that please e-mail me with any training you think the CMA could provide. Or if you feel you could offer a training day!

A final thank you to the South West Committee for their continued hard work, support and above all, their keenness!

### **North Region**

*By Kevin Vigars*

The region has had discussions with Houghall College in relation to training who are offering CMA members the opportunity to take part in one day courses covering a series of conservation topics commencing in early 2007. You can dip in and out as you please (or do all 10 weeks) and the topics include woodland, peatland, coastal and freshwater habitats, as well as plant identification and issues surrounding management plans to give a taster.

The courses cost £45.00 per day or £350 for the lot. Feedback from the first course has been positive and each session was well attended and in some cases over subscribed. For more details contact Stephanie Rutter at Houghall on 0191 3754710 / 0191 3754756 or via e-mail on [stephanie.rutter@edhcc.ac.uk](mailto:stephanie.rutter@edhcc.ac.uk). It is hoped that an additional day will be slotted into the programme to give participants a flavour of the work being undertaken by CMA members to raise the profile of CMA in the region.

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**Merry Christmas to all  
CMA Members  
and a  
Happy New Year!**

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