



Select Committee on a National Plan for Sport and Recreation

Corrected oral evidence: National Plan for Sport and Recreation

Wednesday 27 January 2021

4.30 pm

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Members present: Lord Willis of Knaresborough (The Chair); Lord Addington; Baroness Blower; Baroness Brady; Baroness Grey-Thompson; Lord Hayward; Lord Knight of Weymouth; Lord Krebs; Baroness Morris of Yardley; Lord Moynihan; Baroness Sater; Lord Snape.

Evidence Session No. 10

Virtual Proceeding

Questions 70 - 78

Witnesses

I: Andrew Denton, Chief Executive, Outdoor Industries Association; Gemma Cantelo, Head of Policy and Advocacy, The Ramblers; Sarah Mitchell, Chief Executive, Cycling UK.

USE OF THE TRANSCRIPT

This is a corrected transcript of evidence taken in public and webcast on www.parliamentlive.tv.

Examination of Witnesses

Andrew Denton, Gemma Cantelo and Sarah Mitchell

Q70 **The Chair:** Welcome to our second panel for this afternoon: Andrew Denton, chief executive of the Outdoor Industries Association; Gemma Cantelo, head of policy and advocacy of the Ramblers; and Sarah Mitchell, chief executive of Cycling UK. We are delighted to have you with us. From the last session, you will have gathered that this tends to be a very relaxed committee. We are very anxious to hear your honest views on whatever subjects are put before you to give us some real food for thought as we move forward.

We are aware of the Government's five-year strategy, which began in 2015. I wondered how you would rate the Government's efforts to get more people engaged in outdoor sport and recreation, and leading an active lifestyle. This is a committee that really wants to see Britain become a leading nation across the world in promoting active lifestyles. How are the Government doing? How could they do better?

Gemma Cantelo: Thanks for inviting the Ramblers to give evidence today. We are Britain's biggest walking charity. We have 100,000 members. We run 500 group walks and 365 walking schemes aimed specifically at people who tend to be less physically active, with backing from Sport England. We also advocate for people's access to the outdoors more broadly.

I wanted to go slightly broader than the answers in the previous session to look at activity across government. We have seen some really positive steps. We have seen more people walking. We have seen increases particularly in women walking over the last five years. We know there are still entrenched gaps, particularly since the start of the pandemic. We are seeing an entrenchment of gaps for those people from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds and people from lower incomes. They are not walking as regularly.

We have really appreciated the recognition, particularly over the course of the pandemic, of the importance of exercise and physical activity, not just sport. Sport is incredibly important, but that daily movement and daily physical activity, including walking, is an important part of people's lives and of what enables them to be active. We have seen some positive steps in investing in walking and cycling infrastructure over the last 12 months, and positive promotion of social prescribing and nature prescribing schemes, which help get people both walking and cycling.

Where we see a gap is in the cross-governmental activity to create places that are designed for walking and cycling. We have seen a trebling of investment in walking and cycling. That puts the spend at about £7.50 per head, which still leaves us some way behind the flagship nations. The Netherlands, over the course of about 40 years, has invested about £26 per head just in cycling schemes. There is a disconnect in the level of investment that we put into active travel schemes.

At the same time, we have also seen a decline in investment in the places, particularly the green spaces, that enable us to get outside and be active. We know that people who live within 500 metres of accessible green space are 24% more likely to meet recommended physical activity levels, but we have seen a decline in the level of investment in some of those green spaces, whether that is the path network, our local parks or national trails. There is more that could be done there.

Finally, we would like to see there be greater prioritisation across government policy-making. There are some missed opportunities to make physical activity a part of people's lives. We have the Environment Bill going through Parliament at the moment. There are targets for climate change and nature restoration, quite rightly. We would like there to also be a target for people's access to the natural environment. We know that would have a positive impact on levels of physical activity.

Similarly, as we are looking at what we are spending through the new agricultural payments regime, with most of our footpath network on agricultural land, there is another big opportunity to direct money towards schemes that would improve public access close to where people live, and make our paths more accessible to people who currently struggle to access them because there are stiles or there is no circular route near where they live. There should be more focus on that.

Andrew Denton: Hello, everyone. Thank you very much for welcoming me here. I know many of you from APPGs and from working particularly with Tanni Grey-Thompson. It is nice to see you all here today.

Going back, I take a tiny bit of responsibility. In 2015, David Cameron appointed me to work with Tracey Crouch as the chair of the working group that put the outdoor recreation part into Sporting Future in 2015, for which we as a sector are eternally grateful. That was in the capacity as chief exec of the OIA.

We have about 200 business and organisation members. Unlike the other two here, who are business to consumer, I am business to business. That means that I will have a more general strategic overview, but our members themselves have tens of millions of people. That might be the National Trust, the Ramblers, the British Mountaineering Council and British Canoeing, brands you will have heard of such as JD Sports, Berghaus and The North Face, or the Youth Hostel Association and the Camping and Caravanning Club. We have a super-broad strategic overview here, and that is why the Prime Minister at the time and Tracey Crouch at DCMS asked us to contribute to that.

Has it been a success? There has been a huge move forward. For the first time, active travel, walking and cycling for transportation, was included in part of the work we did with Sport England. That involved us moving to the new Active Lives Survey from the Active People Survey, which has been fantastic. As part of the work I do, I represent outdoor recreation on the ukactive membership council, with Tanni Grey-Thompson. The

integration of Sport England and ukactive has been way, way better since then.

There are lots of positives. The phrase “sport and physical activity” is a fantastic outcome from 2015. It was historically quite sport-orientated. If there is an area one would like to see more—I will cover this at the end in our last big ask—it is that this could go further. There could be more cross-departmental working, with the concept of physical activity and movement for health being across all areas. There is a flavour still within Sporting Future, in its name and its title, that sport is specifically for DCMS and that it is centred on sport, games and these sorts of things. It is so much more than that.

If the pandemic, and the tragic passing of 100,000 deaths at the moment, has taught us anything, it is that we are, as a nation, not active enough. We suffer from overweightness and obesity issues. Having a £2 trillion balance of payment deficit and £400 billion of extra borrowing this year, if we look back at prevention rather than cure as an investment for the long-term mental, physical and social health of the nation, perhaps 2015 was underwhelming in its scope, given what it could have done to build a healthier, more robust and more resilient country. That might have been more exciting than where we ended up.

Sarah Mitchell: Thanks very much for inviting me. It is great to see you all. I am probably going to echo the first two of my colleagues in some respects. Cycling UK is a national cycling charity. Our mission is to make cycling a safe, accessible, enjoyable and, most of all, really normal activity for people who are not always the usual suspects.

Cycling has a huge range of benefits, but one of the challenges for us in government policy is that they range over a number of government departments. We now have a fantastic commitment from the Government through *Gear Change*, the huge document that was put out in July last year on cycling. That was a really bold vision for both cycling and walking. There are some great commitments in there, but a lot of those commitments are connected with other government departments where there is not the same level of commitment as the home department, the Department for Transport.

There could be huge benefits and additional gains by having input from education, such as cycle training for young people, health and environmental policy, on air quality. As an overview, there is a great opportunity. If we could only get better cross-departmental working, we would be able to reap far greater rewards across the board for cycling.

Q71 **Lord Moynihan:** Good afternoon. We have taken evidence to demonstrate how important the sport and recreation sector is to social and community development, as well as to the economy. We would be very interested in your views on that. In particular, how can we capitalise on the boom in informal outdoor exercise and physical activity?

We have heard a lot of very good comments throughout both sessions

about how positive the outlook is, but we really want to address what the barriers are to those two items. What are the difficulties? What challenges do you face?

Gemma Cantelo: As you have said, the benefits and the economic, social and community impacts are well established. I will emphasise the benefits specifically of walking to tourism but also to local communities. In areas where walking infrastructure is prioritised, we know that walkers spend up to 30% more in local shops. There is a tangible benefit for local communities to promoting walking infrastructure, both for tourism and for local communities.

One barrier is a lack of investment in the spaces that could be, and often have been, our flagship green spaces. We should be investing in flagship initiatives such as the England Coast Path and our national trails to ensure that they are of a high quality, and promoting them to both international and domestic tourists, but also to local communities, at the point that we are allowed to travel and access such spaces.

Similarly, we should be promoting our local footpath networks and the routes that exist around towns and cities that people can use to access local amenities, to connect to green spaces and nature, or even to connect to their local sports centres. Too often those routes can feel unsafe, and we know that feeling safe in those spaces can be a particular barrier for young people. Similarly, not knowing where you can go for a walk or having people to go with is a barrier, so we need to invest in schemes that enable people to get outdoors.

Walking schemes for younger people, older people and people who are physically inactive can get them physically active as part of a group walk, but also give them the confidence to access the outdoors near where they live or further afield on an ongoing basis. For us, the barriers are about that making sure you are investing in that green infrastructure and in targeted interventions that enable people to get outdoors and explore those places.

Lord Moynihan: I want to pick up on what you said in response to the first question. Much of what we have heard this afternoon has been about locally driven objectives and the importance of embracing differences between localities and specific initiatives locally. Yet the work you did with Sporting Future and much of what has been discussed has been top-down financing. Sport England was no exception yesterday with its additional £50 million.

Should we not be doing much more to address the two issues I have mentioned by looking to local authorities as the catalyst for significant changes in this area?

Andrew Denton: Yes, that is a very fair point. Tackling the broad question first, we did some work with the Sport and Recreation Alliance, which is another great partner of ours. We produced a report with the catchy title of *Reconomics*. All this is available from the staff there, and

we can give it to you. It values the outdoor recreation economy at around £22 billion. It is about integration. I am coming back to your local authority point here. For example, we know that, in better times when tourism will recover, over 50% of British inbound tourism is within the M25 ring.

Outside that, which is vital to stimulate our economy and to generate travel, tourism and visitor numbers, six out of the 10 things that people do are outdoor recreation-oriented. They love going for walks; they love visiting our national parks. They go to Cumbria; they go to the Borders. Outdoor recreation is a massive driver. It is the biggest number of beds after business, camping and caravanning in the UK. It is a huge, broad base, as opposed to specific sports, which can be quite niche or NGB-oriented.

Outdoor recreation, in which I include cycling and walking, all three of us here, is really, really broad. When you think that the fishing industry is £980 million and outdoor recreation is £22 billion, one starts to understand not only the value, size, employees and the tax but the health benefit of every single one of those pounds. We have to deal with it at a local level, because it is a fractured community. It is not the big six in pharma or one big fishing fleet. It is tens of thousands of SMEs: individual walking guides in Cumbria, small walking groups, cycle and canoe hire, Go Ape trails. It is lots and lots of different things encouraging people to be active, to visit, to travel, to camp, to climb, to walk or to canoe. We should be driving that.

For example, at the moment we are doing some work for the Cumbria adventure tourism sector, which has been devastated by this, because it thrives primarily on overseas visits: Americans, people coming internationally to do guided walks and guided cycles, llama backpacking and mountain biking across the country on a sea-to-sea trail. Cumbria is sitting in the middle of this economic impact and having a consequent health impact.

Going back to your original question on society, community and economy, outdoor recreation can glue all that together, and put millions and millions, if not billions, of pounds of taxes back in. It can employ people in rural communities, particularly young people, and people who are harder to employ in urban communities. It can drive health as an outcome of a bigger community and bigger economic impact. Yes, we should be pushing it locally, with tourism and local authorities.

Sarah Mitchell: I agree with Andrew. Just from cycling alone there is a huge benefit to the economy. We have estimated that the total tourism spend from cyclists and mountain bikers is about £520 million, which is huge. There are about 37,000 jobs attached to that in normal circumstances. We have been doing work with three big counties on how they could exploit cycle tourism for their own gain locally. There are huge benefits for society, community and the environment from cycling.

On the point about barriers, similar to Gemma, I think that one good thing about the initial Covid-related lockdown, despite all the other tragedies we have had to put up with, is infrastructure. It showed that, when roads are quieter, people want to go out on their bikes. We saw a huge increase of people on their bikes. Really interestingly, we have also seen evidence of a massive increase in women getting out on their bikes during that period. We have been working on this a lot at Cycling UK, and we are really keen to make inroads on it. We have been looking at the learning from that to inform some of our projects.

We cannot rely on just infrastructure. There has to be some emphasis on behaviour change, thinking about the practical and psychological barriers to people getting started on exercise, such as cycling. Some of that has to do with cost and access to bikes, but a lot of it has to do with role modelling and understanding that people like me could be on a bike. That is one of the areas of work we are really focused on at Cycling UK.

- Q72 **Lord Krebs:** This actually goes back to the opening question. Both Sarah and Gemma talked about cross-department co-ordination. One department that has not been mentioned is the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. With the Government's proposal to build 300,000 new homes a year—they are nowhere near that, but that is what they want to do—it is really important that, in building those homes, whether they are new villages, new towns or new developments within existing cities such as my home city of Oxford, cycling and walking are taken into account. Are new developments taking into account walking and cycling sufficiently, in your view?

Sarah Mitchell: This is something I was quite keen to mention. No, not at the moment. We obviously support the housebuilding programme. It is incredibly important for all of us that we get decent and affordable houses for people across the country. There is a huge opportunity with the planning Bill. We could be baking in that active travel element from the start, making it easier for people to cycle or walk into town than to drive. It would help the Government to fulfil a lot of their other obligations and commitments on green transport and air quality.

For us, it seems like a really obvious point to bake that into planning now, to help fulfil those commitments and achieve the goals we all want to achieve in the future. Unfortunately, at the moment, so many new developments are in very car-dependent locations, which not only leads to further traffic and pollution but puts people off cycling on those roads because they become too busy. Yes, I would agree.

- Q73 **Baroness Morris of Yardley:** This is probably an unfair question, but, having the three of you, in particular Gemma and Sarah, I cannot resist it, because it is one of my bugbears. All three of you have put together cycling and walking, and you have talked about feeling safe from vehicles. I want to raise the question of pedestrians feeling safe from cyclists, because it really drives me mad.

Certainly in London, the thing that will stop people walking is cyclists on

the pavement, going the wrong way down one-way streets and the rest of it. I know you will say that is not legal, but I have never yet heard of those byelaws or that guidance being enforced. I am reasonably active, and I move reasonably quickly, but I certainly do not walk in straight lines down a pavement because I do not think I need to. Therefore, I am constantly fearful of the cyclists.

This is an increasingly big issue, and I would not like to see the public turn against cyclists, but, unless something is done, they will do, because they are threatening the safe space for pedestrians in what is designated pedestrian space. My question to you is twofold. First, as leadership of the sector, can you do anything about this? Secondly, is this something the Government ever talk to you about when they talk about developing opportunities for cycling and walking?

Sarah Mitchell: I do not see that there is a conflict between cyclists and walkers, and we work very closely with the Ramblers and Living Streets. There is a different question about occasional cyclists who are cycling on pavements. That is not what we represent, and it is certainly not what we advocate.

This is why, not just on London roads but on roads that are very congested, we would always call for segregated and separate cycle lanes, so cyclists have somewhere they feel safe to cycle, particularly those who are not experienced, who would feel nervous about being on busy roads and encountering traffic, but also so that pedestrians clearly have their own part of the pavement, and the road is for cars. That is the solution that would make it safer for all of us in whatever form, particularly those who are involved in active transport and therefore are contributing, being helpful to the environment and looking after their own health.

Gemma Cantelo: As a person who both walks and cycles, I would emphasise the importance of infrastructure that limits the opportunities for conflict. Sarah mentioned segregated spaces for cyclists. We know that those conflicts sometimes happen. I would also recommend the report published by Transport for All yesterday, which talks about how we can make sure that low-traffic neighbourhoods are accessible for everybody. There is a huge amount of learning in that about how we can design spaces so the most vulnerable people in our communities who are walking or cycling are catered for in our towns and cities. There is a lot to be improved, but many of the challenges are because of poor infrastructure.

Q74 **The Chair:** Thank you for that, Baroness Morris. Both of us suffer this problem outside the Houses of Parliament on a daily basis, as we go to and from our offices. We will leave that there.

How would you describe the state of affairs in the distribution and accessibility of green spaces and other open areas where outdoor sport and recreation can take place? To what extent do the current planning and other regulations help or hinder outdoor sport and recreation? This perhaps picks up some of the points from the last question as well.

Baroness Grey-Thompson: Additional to that, I am really interested in how we can make walking and cycling easier, especially for disabled people, but this fits into planning. A lot of bike paths and footpaths now have stiles or barriers, and the only people they seem to stop are wheelchair users and older people. They are there for very good reasons, but how could we be more creative in opening spaces? Especially around Oxford and Cambridge, we seem to see lots of those open spaces being shut down. When you add in issues with parking, accessible toilets and things like that, it just makes it harder and harder for quite a large group of people to be active.

Andrew Denton: I will hand this to Gemma and Sarah fairly quickly, because we met before and split the areas where we thought we had different expertise. They are both going to be strong on this.

This is an Ordnance Survey map; we would love to send you all one. We have highlighted all the green and blue spaces in London alone. It is staggering to see what there is for people to get outdoors and be active. You may have heard of a guy called Daniel Raven-Ellison, who launched the London National Park City last year, in bolder and better times. It is possible for people to be active outdoors, but, as Tanni says, it can be incredibly challenging. As Gemma and Sarah are both better and more up to speed on this, I am not going to waste anyone's time. I will hand it over to Sarah; she can take it from there.

The Chair: You have your orders, Sarah.

Sarah Mitchell: Yes, so I hear. We did talk together beforehand, because we did not want to repeat ourselves in front of you, thinking of your time. Gemma was going to pick up on our joint work. Ramblers and Cycling UK have been working together on the Environment Bill.

The point I made in response to Lord Krebs' question about planning is a big concern. Another important area is where routes are joined up. One of the challenges we face with cycling is that there are lots of really interesting individual routes, but they are not necessarily connected properly. That is a frustration that we understand and share. That could be because of barriers such as stiles, which make them inaccessible for all sorts of people who want to use them, or because of major roads that mean they are not connected properly or only go so far.

Gemma Cantelo: On the distribution of green space, we know that 2.7 million people do not live within 10 minutes' walk of green space. That is important for how much physical activity they do. We also know that those who are least likely to live close to green space are people from black, Asian and minority ethnic communities and people with a household income under £15,000, so people below the poverty line. That entrenches some of the gaps in health outcomes that we see, too.

Taking the point about stiles and improving access, we completely agree with all the points that Baroness Grey-Thompson raised. We know that the countryside and our path network is not as accessible to everyone as

it should be. There needs to be more investment to ensure that inaccessible path furniture, such as stiles, is, where possible, replaced by things that are more accessible. There also need to be improvements to surfacing and other, less visible barriers to access, such as poor public transport and poor signposting, so people do not know where they can go. Creating circular walks would enable people not to walk from one point to somewhere far off into the distance, but to do a loop that takes them back to somewhere that is more accessible by public transport.

We would describe the current distribution as unequal. There is a lot that we could do to improve the quality and accessibility of the green spaces that we can access.

Baroness Grey-Thompson: That is really useful. Making outside spaces accessible is an activity that is sometimes forgotten. We do not want concrete to be stuck everywhere. Sometimes barriers appear to be put in place for the right reasons, but they never seem to be thought about. That is very useful. Thank you.

Andrew Denton: A number of you have been involved in the Agriculture Bill. British Canoeing has done a huge amount of work on shared, fair access for all on rivers and waterways. Fair access to waterways was left behind in the CROW Act. Tanni Grey-Thompson talked about disabled access, and the work we do with canoeists in this area is fantastic. I would urge you to listen to British Canoeing, which worked with some of you on the Agriculture Bill. This is not about giving canoeists more space, but about fair, shared and sustainable access to waterways, so that it matches somewhat the CROW Act and the walking access we have at the moment.

Lord Addington: On the Agriculture Bill, when we were looking at access to facilities, we discovered that there was tremendous resistance to anything to do with rivers on a coherent basis, and a very unrealistic attitude to what could be achieved on that. The two sides are still at loggerheads there. If at any point we look at encouraging this, there has to be coherent planning about how you get to water and what bit of water can be used. You cannot paddle down a trout stream when people are fishing without getting somebody upset.

The Chair: I will leave that on the record.

Q75 **Baroness Brady:** Good afternoon, everybody. We know that the UK is very fortunate to have some of the best countryside and outdoor spaces in the world. How do we encourage and foster a lifelong love of the outdoors among children and young people? In England, adventurous outdoor activities are part of the PE curriculum, but a report in 2018 said that the amount of time young people are spending outdoors on these activities is declining. Are there sufficient opportunities through schools and other channels for children to experience outdoor activities in PE?

Andrew Denton: This is a real passion of mine. I was a teacher; I worked in outdoor ed. I was on the board of something called Project

Wild Thing. If you have not seen the movie, I would urge you to go. It was a collaboration between the National Trust, the RSPCA, Play England and the RSPB about exactly this: children's need to engage with nature and the outdoors.

It is manifold. It is not just physical activity and sport, which is what we are here for. People who love the outdoors protect it. Climate change and the environment is one of the biggest changes we have. There is incredible research coming through Outward Bound about building resilience, character and the opportunity to bounce back. The challenges our children have at the moment, with a year locked down, are extraordinary. At the same time, the last time a child had an outdoor residential was 16 March 2020, and we very much doubt that they will be having them this summer, unless we are really lucky. Even in that case it will be with masks and two-metre taping around them. It is just tragic.

We have tens of thousands of mountain guides, ski instructors and climbers stacking shelves in Amazon and Tesco at the moment. It is vital. There is a big petition going around at the moment for outdoor residential support. This is from the YHA, Outward Bound and our whole sector, which we are world-class and leading on. Please bear that in mind if you see that petition.

In answer to Baroness Brady's question, we have kind of done it. We got money from Unilever to fund this movie, we got it on Channel 4, we got it in 50 cinemas throughout the UK. There is a huge plan there; there is loads of background. There are asks about including outdoor residentials and activity in Ofsted. At the moment, you can inspect a school and, as long as it is good at reading, writing and arithmetic, it will be outstanding. We feel it should also look at the physical activity in that school. Do they take their kids away? Do they build resilience and the ability to spend a night away from their parents, perhaps under canvas or looking up at some stars and baking a marshmallow? Many of you, perhaps because you come from an older generation like I do, will have done these things. There is a fabulous T-shirt that says, "Better a broken arm than a broken spirit". Our idea is that being adventurous at a young age builds that fantastic resilience.

I will finish, because it is an area of passion for me, with some work that Play England did, showing that the longer you delay children having those mini adventures and taking control of their own risk, perhaps by having a go in a canoe, a camp or a walk, the more likely they are to make some catastrophic errors when they finally, as a teenager, are released into the great outdoors. By the "great outdoors", I mean perhaps experiencing new relationships, new jobs or new cities. They need to build risk in an early and safe way, and that is what outdoor recreation can do. It is vital. We have the tools. We can deliver it. Support us on that. I will talk to your staff when we have a bit more time about the delivery side of that.

Sarah Mitchell: To speak specifically to cycling and younger people, when you look at the Netherlands, you can see that about two-thirds of primary school children cycle to school. Here in the UK it is a relatively

small number. Only 1% to 3% of primary and secondary schoolchildren cycle to school. I was one of those children. I did cycling proficiency when I was at school. If we were to talk to our colleagues in Bikeability who now run cycle proficiency across the UK, they would probably say that the number of people cycling to school and kids who are able to cycle reflects their economic background and the level of inequality in the country.

One fantastic thing we could do is to enable that vision in *Gear Change* to become true, which is this idea that cycle training is available to every adult and child. Starting with children is a brilliant way to do that. By inspiring children at that age to get on their bikes, you enable them to keep cycling and keep active, in a way that is really practical and can be integrated very easily into the rest of their lives. Enabling and encouraging schools to have time on the curriculum, through the Department for Education, for cycle training, of the sort that I did when I was at junior school, would be an incredibly powerful and effective way to do that.

Gemma Cantelo: I agree with everything Andrew and Sarah have raised. As with cycling, normalising walking is important for school-age children too, promoting things such as school streets and encouraging children and parents to walk to school as part of their daily activity. Similarly, creating spaces that are filled with nature close to where people live, and improving the links to what we sometimes call the accessible countryside, will help give people the confidence, as they go into adulthood, to continue to access those outdoor spaces. We know that confidence is one of the major barriers to people who did not have access to nature in childhood enjoying the outdoors as adults.

It is important to focus on the transition between childhood and adulthood. Young people aged between 16 and 25 is a group we are targeting in Scotland at the moment. We are providing them with a peer group that they can go out and build their confidence with, so that they can get outside, know where they can go and have people to go with.

Q76 **Baroness Blower:** Andrew, I would not wish on schools more types of inspection by Ofsted, but it might be possible to emulate what I know for certain happens in Scandinavia, where lots of learning takes place outside of classrooms. It is not couched as outdoor activity; it is just learning that you are doing outside rather than indoors. Is there anything you would like to say that speaks to that?

Andrew Denton: Some of you may have heard of the Forest Schools programme. This could be either full accreditation as a forest school or simply providing forest school days. At the moment, we have some work going through both in the Welsh Government and in the UK. We literally have these tens of thousands of unemployed outdoor instructors at the moment, who are going into school peripatetically and delivering small adventure experiences, nature experiences or outdoor experiences.

We all know there is plenty of research on this. I have book loads of it down here. We have fantastic peer-reviewed evidence that learning

outdoors in a physical environment, in green spaces or blue spaces, while moving your body, enhances learning and memory for young people.

We can look to Scandinavia in many areas, but this is particularly about that integration, once you begin to love it and learn about it. Climate change and health are probably the two biggest things at the moment, and this just fuses them together. If you learn to love it, you want to maintain it. It is no surprise that what they learn in Scandinavia means it is one of the greenest and most sustainable places in the world. Yes, I could not agree more, and we would be delighted to supply some background information following this session.

The Chair: We are actually looking at Scandinavia next week. That was a good prelude.

Q77 Baroness Morris of Yardley: How do you promote diversity and inclusion among your workforce of volunteers and participants? How confident are you about the statistics? It is on data that we tend to develop policy or make judgments. I realise how difficult it is to collect that data and what a bureaucratic burden it can be. In answering, perhaps you could comment on that, and say whether there is a better way of us having the data or the intelligence about this area.

Sarah Mitchell: We realised a number of years ago that cycling is predominantly male and white. It is great that all those white men enjoy cycling, but we believe that a far greater number and range of people can benefit from cycling and get a lot out of it. Indeed, if we look at some of our neighbouring countries, they are much more diverse in their cycling population based on gender, age and ethnicity. There is much more of a balance. We believe it is possible.

A lot of our work over the last five years has been focused on reaching out to different communities and supporting them to take up cycling. We have a huge programme called the Big Bike Revival, which is about bringing old bikes back into use. We work with lots of cycle maintenance, cycle training and bike recycling schemes across England to do that. It is about simply fixing peoples bikes, and that has helped us work with lots of non-regular cyclists. Half our participants were women, which is really unlike the usual cycling statistics, and 30% were from the most deprived part of the country. It is very different from the usual set-up of cycling.

We have another project about new cyclers, Cycling for Health, which is a pilot social prescription service. It is about working with referrers within primary care to get them to refer fairly inactive people, who could really benefit from cycling, to take up cycling for the first time and giving them very bespoke support for that.

We have a further project in our community clubs. We have about 200 community cycling clubs across England and Scotland. They are there to help people who have just taken up cycling sustain it, so it is not just a one-off and you do not just get your bike out, ride it for a couple of weeks, get a puncture and then stop. It is about sustaining that level of

activity through community groups. That has had an incredible reach. Half the participants were women; 53% were in deprived neighbourhoods, which we thought was a fantastic outcome; 56% were from BAME backgrounds, which again is highly unusual in cycling.

Throughout those three projects, to answer your question about data, our focus has been on behavioural science. We have taken a very thoughtful approach based on what the barriers are, crafted our responses to particular communities and followed through to see what the impact of those changes is. We have massively increased and improved the quality of the data we can collect. It is onerous, but we feel you have to have the data to understand what works.

Although there is an awful lot of collecting data, which I am sure is quite annoying to our participants, we have tried to make it as fun as we can. We have turned it into little fun questionnaires; we have asked them to do it while they are waiting for the bike to be fixed so it is not something they have to go away, do and come back. We have tried lots of little tricks to get the data back as quickly as we can, so that we know the data we give our funders is reliable, but also so that we understand how effective our projects are and can continuously improve them, which is essential.

I am the first female chief executive that Cycling UK has had in over 140 years. That in itself marks a change for us as an organisation. We have just elected our second female chair of trustees. We now have an entirely female top team at Cycling UK, which is a big change. As a result of Black Lives Matter last summer, we did a really big process of internal reflection. We are undertaking a diversity and inclusion audit of the organisation to better understand what our baseline is within our staff, our trustees and our members. This year we will be publishing an action plan attached to that, covering what we will do internally but also what we would like to do in partnership with others across the sector to help increase diversity across the board.

We are focusing in the coming months on women in cycling, as you might expect from an all-female top team. We have a women's festival of cycling, which will be going on for a whole month in the summer, where we will encourage people, not just members of Cycling UK but women across the country, to get involved in cycling for the first time.

Gemma Cantelo: Like most organisations in the sector, we recognise that we need to go further and more quickly when it comes to diversity and inclusion. Like Cycling UK, we are also in the process of setting up a programme of work focused on equality, diversity and inclusion. That looks at our people: our staff, our board and our volunteers. We are doing what we can in our HR practices to ensure that we are as inclusive as we can be. We have just put out adverts for new members of our board, in which we are particularly welcoming applications from people from LGBTQI and black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, so that we have lived experience at the top of the organisation to help with what that programme looks like in practice.

We also recognise that there are some limits to the internal expertise we have at the moment, so we are engaging with external specialists to help us with that work. We are also looking to amplify the voices and work with and support other organisations that are already doing this, such as Black Girls Hike, Mosaic, Sheffield Environmental Movement and Steppers UK. We have a lot to learn from those organisations, and we are in listening mode now, as well as hoping to work on apps and other things that make us more diverse and inclusive in the long term.

In our advocacy work, we are increasingly talking about the barriers to walking and access to nature. We do work on inequalities, access to green space and the barriers to people accessing the countryside. When we are trying to influence government policy, those are things we are championing and picking up.

On a practical level, we run our well-being walks scheme, which has 365 schemes across the country. That is focused on people who have tended to be less physically active, encouraging them to increase and maintain their physical activity levels. We have good participation there from older people and people with long-term health conditions. Those schemes have been successful in enabling people to maintain physical activity levels. We deliver them by working in partnership with local authorities and local community groups. We want to strengthen that engagement, particularly with local community leaders, to ensure that we are listening to the needs of local communities rather than forcing a top-down model on them. We were pleased to see that reflected in the Sport England strategy that came out yesterday.

Andrew Denton: I will keep this one brief. Diversity and inclusion is a vital area, and it is one we are working on from an organisational perspective. Because we are business to business, some of our members are incredibly diverse and inclusive, and have some fantastic and exciting programmes, such as JD Sports, The North Face and Adidas.

Indoor climbing walls, interestingly, are very representative. They are fairly balanced gender-wise, they have good representation of the BAME community, they have good access for disabled climbing right across the board. On the other hand, outdoor climbing in national parks is appalling and very pale, male, white and stale. I believe that approximately 17% of the population is from a BAME background and only 1% of the population visits national parks. In some of our areas, we are doing really well. In other areas, it is catastrophic.

Part of the solution is clarifying the definition. Historically, outdoor recreation has been—I do not mean to stereotype, because I am that stereotype—someone wearing a bobble hat, out in the Lake District, striding up a mountain, pulling small children who are complaining and soaking wet behind them. That may not be the only way of experiencing outdoor recreation.

There is a lot more urban adventure. Indoor climbing walls are a great example, as are indoor skiing centres, BMX tracks, urban adventure

assault courses and urban races, both mountain biking and road biking. For us as a sector to reach out inclusively, rather than just yelling, “You should enjoy what we’re doing”, is a question of asking the diverse community, “What do you enjoy doing?” and looking at how you can define that as outdoor adventure in some way.

Three days ago, we put £20,000 into a project with Leeds Beckett University, along with a selection of people: Mountain Training, the British Mountaineering Council, the National Trust and the Association of British Climbing Walls. We have all pulled that money together and asked Leeds Beckett University to do this research to get that baseline. We will be working with Sport England, ukactive and others on that, doing desk research as well as focus groups, so we can move forward in that area.

We are certainly investing in it. As an organisation, our AGM next year is focused on diversity and inclusion. We have Mosaic, Black Girls Hike and a number of the key drivers coming to talk to us, to see what more we can do. We are very aware of it, and we very much need to do it. In some areas, we are doing a fantastic job; in other areas, we have a long way to go.

Q78 Lord Knight of Weymouth: When we publish our final report later this year, we will have to be disciplined in the number of recommendations we make, if we are to be listened to. In a similar vein, if you were only allowed one recommendation each—you have collaborated, so I am sure there will be three different ones—for us to make to government, what would it be?

Sarah Mitchell: It would be a point about cross-departmental collaboration and ownership. Something in the plan needs to have a central owner that will chase and make sure that all the recommendations that cross into different departments are fulfilled. However you want to do that, a person or a set of targets, that would be my wish to add to your list.

Andrew Denton: You are absolutely right: we did collaborate. As a summary, I felt that physical activity has historically been viewed as games or sport, so a DCMS thing, and it is just not. That funding is great, but it is tiny. The biggest crises facing us at the moment are climate change and health. We are sitting in the middle of a pandemic, very aware that our country was less active and more obese than almost any other country in Europe. Look at our numbers. Spending £1 billion on sport and then £400 billion in one year to fix the problem is disproportionate.

To have sport and physical activity—I am talking to the converted with Tanni Grey-Thompson, but probably all of you—at the core of everything we do is utterly vital. For our perspective, we need an outdoor recreation tsar to help pull that together. When I did that work with David Cameron, we managed to get Jane Ellison, Helen Grant and Tracey Crouch. Four or five Ministers from multiple departments had a focus on physical activity

and outdoor recreation. We brought Defra in. We had Natural England talking to Sport England talking to Public Health England.

We really started well, but then there was an election and the whole thing fell apart. Now, suddenly, no one cares. Drive that cross-department working, get some sort of central outdoor recreation tsar and strategy, and put it right at the heart of the recovery. Without a healthy nation, you will never have a healthy economy and we will go nowhere fast.

Gemma Cantelo: I have to follow that; thanks, Andrew. The big thing for me is place and delivering places that enable us to live active lives. That has to take advantage of the fantastic assets we already have, whether that is public rights of way, parks or our streets and neighbourhoods. We need a focus on place across all levels of government.

The Chair: Can I again thank the panel for an excellent session this afternoon? Thank you very much indeed for your answers. Thank you to the committee for the way in which you so courteously asked our guests the questions, often with a little barb in them for good measure. To Andrew Denton, Gemma Cantelo and Sarah Mitchell, thank you all very much indeed.