

THE RISE AND FALL OF COUNTRYSIDE MANAGEMENT

A historical account

Ian D. Rotherham



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The Rise and Fall of Countryside Management

For at least half a century since the emergence of Country Parks and Forest Parks, countryside services have provided leisure, tourism, conservation, restoration, and regeneration across Britain. Yet these services are currently being decimated as public services are sacrificed to the new era of austerity.

The role and importance of countryside management have been barely documented, and the consequences and ramifications of cuts to these services are overlooked and misunderstood. This volume rigorously examines the issues surrounding countryside management in Britain. The author brings together the results of stakeholder workshops and interviews, and in-depth individual case studies, as well as a major study for the Countryside Agency which assessed and evaluated every countryside service provision in England. A full and extensive literature review traces the ideas of countryside management back to their origins, and the author considers the wider relationships and ramifications with countryside and ranger provisions around the world, including North America and Europe.

The book provides a critical overview of the history and importance of countryside management, detailing the achievements of a largely forgotten sector and highlighting its pivotal yet often underappreciated role in the wellbeing of people and communities. It serves as a challenge to students, planners, politicians, conservationists, environmentalists, and land managers, in a diversity of disciplines that work with or have interests in countryside, leisure and tourism, community issues, education, and nature conservation.

Ian D. Rotherham is Professor of Environmental Geography and Reader in Tourism and Environmental Change at Sheffield Hallam University, UK.

'This is the most definitive account of our sector's development we have ever seen. It should be an essential read for students and all countryside managers and rangers.'

Dan Barnett, *Chairman, Countryside Management Association, UK*

'This is a fascinating, comprehensive, timely, and critical review of our use and management of the countryside.'

Bill Blackledge, *Chartered Landscape Architect, The Landscape Institute, UK*

'Follow the fortunes of the rise and fall of countryside management across the UK, from one period of austerity after the Second World War to the current contemporary interpretation of hard economic times. This volume addresses what it has meant in enabling public outdoor spaces to be well managed and enjoyed. The historical account of public sector interventions in countryside management over the last 70 years paints a picture of adaptation and deftness to such changing fortunes. It shows how, to deal with challenges over this period, those working in this field have been highly creative and innovative.'

For someone who has been involved for the last 40 years, Ian's research and insights brought back many good memories. These recollections were of comradeship and finding practical solutions in a collaborative way and this book deserves to be read.'

Jo Burgon, *Chairman, Outdoor Recreation Network, UK*

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About the author

Ian Rotherham was born in Sheffield (UK) in 1956. He graduated with a First Class Degree in Ecology from the University of Lancaster and then was awarded his PhD in Botany from the University of Sheffield. He is Professor of Environmental Geography and Reader in Tourism and Environmental Change at Sheffield Hallam University, and is a Distinguished International Visiting Scholar at the National Sun-yat Sen University in Taiwan. For ten years in the 1980s and 1990s, he was responsible for delivering ecological advisory services in relation to countryside management in the Sheffield area including much of the Peak District. He has been involved with countryside management, with local authorities and governmental agencies such as the Countryside Commission and the Countryside Agency for over thirty years.

He has written over 400 papers and articles and a number of books. His research includes landscape history, the economics of landscape change, issues of invasive alien species, urban ecology, and aspects of tourism and economic development. He works extensively with the popular media and with grassroots conservation groups. He chairs a number of national and international committees and working groups and his work informs the development of relevant policies and strategies. He has acted as an advisor to a number of governments internationally.

Foreword

When asked to write a Foreword for this book, I wondered whether the opportunity might be, for me, a hugely indulgent (and sometimes cathartic) trip down memory lane. However, it is certainly something much more substantial in terms of producing a vital record, offering a unique analysis of what appears to be a moment in time in the evolution of caring for our countryside and greenspaces.

Having worked with Countryside Management Services for some thirty years, I have to say it has been a privilege to work with so many enthusiastic and highly professional people, all committed to doing their very best for the environment, for recreation, for conservation, and for their local patches. However, and regrettably, it does seem in retrospect that the late 1970s to 1990s was indeed some kind of ‘Golden Age’ for Countryside Management. This was a period when there were numerous projects and staff working in many different local environments, from the deepest rural countryside in our National Parks, to river valleys flowing right into the centre of our cities. So why does it now feel as though countryside management is a thing of the past? Have we learnt any lessons to take us forward from this pioneering and excitingly experimental era?

It is of course easy to blame this more recent decline on current problems with public sector funding, etc., but I believe it is less simplistic than that. It is about a changed relationship between central and local government, and I am not solely referring to the devolution of national government initiatives to a more local level in terms of determination, prioritisation and resourcing. There seems to have been a fundamental shift in terms of the role of the public sector from subsidising and supporting initiatives that deliver public benefit, to focussing on those that more clearly deliver economic benefit. Of course, the results of both can and often are synonymous; but the challenge for those working in the countryside and environment sector more widely is for them to be better able to demonstrate and articulate the wide-ranging benefits delivered by their work. Although individual projects and services have in many cases documented their own experiences, a comprehensive and comparative analysis

of the successes, failures and lessons learnt from this important period, for the benefit of current and future generations, is sadly missing.

That said, many problems we struggled with during those years still exist today. As this book clearly illustrates, countryside management was delivering sustainable development before we were even using the term! At about the same time as the *World Conservation Strategy* and the Conservation and Development Programme for the UK (a response to the *World Conservation Strategy*) were setting out the critical nature of 'sustainability', countryside management services (particularly the area-based countryside management projects) were evolving new modes of operation. These allowed them to demonstrate that it was possible to balance the needs of their areas, in terms of maintaining and enhancing the area for wildlife, whilst also providing for and encouraging visitors, and responding positively to the area's economic needs. This could involve either working with landowners and farmers in rural areas, addressing their needs, even providing financial assistance on occasions with repairs to the walls and fences that are so vital for both landscape and visitors, for example, or helping deal with problems of degradation and vandalism in the urban fringe. Before this, there had been a much stronger focus on the difficulties of balancing conservation requirements with those of potential visitors; but countryside management evolved as a mechanism for recognising and balancing these needs with those of the local communities and local land managers, by developing a wide range of challenging but successful initiatives.

This timely book takes us through much of the background, to provide a rich resource for charting the growth in service and expertise, both in England and further afield. The more detailed analysis of a number of case studies and a critical evaluation of the history of countryside management, offers a valuable insight into the collective lessons learnt and best practices developed from this period. It is hoped that, at the very least, they will be better understood and valued in the future. However, the crucial analysis of the current situation of many of these services and projects offers a much less hopeful picture. More optimistically, this analysis surely makes a persuasive case for those who continue to grapple with all the issues raised by sustainable management of our countryside and green-spaces to look again at some of these programmes and the lessons learnt as potential solutions for some of the problems we currently face.

This book offers a challenge to the sector. During the period covered here there were both local democratic structures with the resources and confidence to offer stable core funding to projects, and a national champion with the resources and confidence to take risks and experiment to find locally appropriate solutions. The model therefore clearly worked well, and was a key contributory factor in the successes this book charts. Nevertheless, everything feels very different now, with tight budget constraints both nationally and locally, and inevitable pressure to demonstrate

clear tangible and timely outcomes for every penny invested. However, if the problems and challenges remain, but this model can no longer work in the way it has, how can we meet our present and future needs in this area? How can we take the lessons from this period and use them to build a new delivery model that better fits our current situation?

Hazel N. Thomas
November 2014

Preface

This is an historical account of the emergence, evolution, and decline of an unappreciated service supporting sustainable communities and countryside. The book is based primarily on around thirty years' hands-on experience in countryside management and related areas and on a major study for the Countryside Agency to assess and evaluate local authority countryside service provision in England. Since the later 1960s, with the emergence of Country Parks and Forest Parks, countryside services have been at the heart of delivering countryside leisure, recreation, tourism, and conservation across the entire country. They were vital to many land restoration and regional regeneration projects from the 1970s through to the 2000s, and today are at the heart of many initiatives to deliver health and wellbeing, active citizenship, economic renewal, and biodiversity. Yet these services are currently being decimated as public services are sacrificed to the new era of austerity. Following cuts to liberal studies and low-cost adult education, countryside management is another facet in our quality of life, taken for granted, but now under the most severe threat. This is surprising when individual projects can be documented which have transformed landscapes, lives, and economies. They provide education facilities, support, and adult training too. Until now with this book, these roles and their importance have been barely documented; planners, politicians, and others seem blissfully ignorant of the consequences and ramifications of the cuts. Interestingly, too, professionals in the fields of tourism, leisure, outdoor recreation, and sports have limited awareness or understanding of countryside management and the associated disciplines.

Based on a major national review in England, on stakeholder workshops and interviews, and on in-depth individual case studies, this book rigorously examines the issues, the alternatives, and the consequences. The volume includes a full and extensive literature review, which traces the ideas of countryside management back to their origins in Empire and Commonwealth Forestry Services, and in the Ranger Services of American National Parks. It considers relationships to National Parks, the Forestry Commission, and the voluntary and private sectors. From its urban and urban-fringe pasts in the 1980s, to the wider services developed through Community Forests

and the New National Forest, the text details the achievements of a largely forgotten sector. Whilst based strongly on an English in-depth study, the findings and content relate to the whole of the British Isles. Furthermore, in both the introductory chapters and the concluding section of the book, the author considers the wider relationships and ramifications with countryside and ranger provisions around the world, including North America, and Europe. Along with the influences of the Empire Forestry Services, British countryside management was strongly affected by the North American models of Forest and National Parks Services. In recent decades, British models have influenced and affected those emerging across parts of Europe. The book addresses the various approaches which are possible and that have been tried and tested, and the contributions to countryside services made by private, voluntary, and public sectors. This is to seek a positive way forwards that does not jettison the gains and progress made over the last forty to fifty years. The core research was undertaken in England and includes long-term (thirty-year) observational studies of particular services. However, the book addresses issues pertinent to delivery of countryside services across the whole of Great Britain, including the devolved regions and countries, and from the urban heartlands to the rural National Parks.

The book:

- 1 brings together a unique review of the historic development of modern countryside services, Country Parks, Forest Parks, and National Parks;
- 2 considers the need for such services and how they were targeted to maximum effect;
- 3 discusses how countryside services have delivered so much that today is taken for granted and yet is at the heart of many community partnerships;
- 4 presents overviews of key issues with case studies and case histories to exemplify key points;
- 5 provides a critical overview of the broad issues to challenge planners, politicians, conservationists, environmentalists, and land managers. This relates to a diversity of disciplines working with or having interests in countryside, leisure and tourism, community issues, education, and biodiversity.

The work draws on major stakeholder studies in 2005/2006 (Rotherham *et al.*, 2006c, 2006d, 2006e), and by my postgraduate student Andy Carnall in 2013, and refers to a Scottish study (Mackie, 2013). Action research and long-term observational case studies underpin the core of the volume.

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Abbreviations

ACT	Activity Coordination Team
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
BAP	Biodiversity Action Plan
BARS	Biodiversity Action Reporting System
BEN	Black Environment Network
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic group
BMI	body mass index
BRAG	Biodiversity Research Advisory Group
BRIG	Biodiversity Reporting and Information Group
BTCV	British Trust for Conservation Volunteers
CABE	Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment
CCC	Civilian Conservation Corps
CCPR	Central Council for Physical Recreation
CCS	Countryside Commission for Scotland
CCT	Compulsory Competitive Tendering
CCW	Countryside Council for Wales
CEOs	Chief Education Officers
CIEEM	Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management
CMA	Countryside Management Association
CMS	countryside management services
CO ₂	carbon dioxide
CoAg	Countryside Agency
CoCo	Countryside Commission
CPPs	Community Planning Partnerships
CPRE	Council for the Protection of Rural England
CPS	Countryside Premium Scheme
CRN	Countryside Recreation Network
CROW Act	Countryside Rights of Way Act
CRRAG	Countryside Recreation Research Advisory Group
Defra	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DoE	Department of the Environment
EEC	European Economic Community

EHSNI	Environment and Heritage Service, Northern Ireland
ESA	Environmentally Sensitive Areas
ESS	Environmental Stewardship Scheme
EU	European Union
FMD	foot-and-mouth disease
FTE	full-time equivalent
GDP	gross domestic product
HLF	Heritage Lottery Fund
IRF	International Ranger Federation
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
JCP	Job Creation Programme
JNCC	Joint Nature Conservation Committee
LANTRA	Non-governmental body focussed on the skills and training needs of land management and production, animal health and welfare, and environmental industries
LAR	Landscape and Recreation division of the Countryside Agency
LBAPs	Local Biodiversity Action Plans
LEAs	Local Education Authorities
LNR	Local Nature Reserves
LPP	Local Products Programmes
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
MBC	Metropolitan Borough Council
MENE	Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment
MSC	Manpower Services Commission
NCC	Nature Conservancy Council
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NNR	National Nature Reserves
NPC	National Parks Commission
NPS	National Park Service
NVQs	National Vocational Qualifications
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
PPG	Planning Policy Guidance
PPI	Positive Planning Intervention
PPSs	Planning Policy Statements
RDC	Rural Development Commission
REACT	Regeneration through Environmental Action
RoW	Rights of Way
RoWIPs	Rights of Way Improvement Plans
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
SAC	Special Areas of Conservation
SBS	Scottish Biodiversity Strategy
SBSG	Sheffield Bird Study Group
SCRA	Scottish Rangers Association

SHEBEEN	Sheffield Black and Ethnic Minority Environmental Network
SINCs	Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation
SNH	Scottish Natural Heritage
SOAs	Single Outcome Agreements
SPA	Special Protection Areas
STEP	Special Temporary Employment Programme
SVQ	Scottish Vocational Qualification
SWAP	Sheffield Wildlife Action Partnership
SWT	Scottish Wildlife Trust
TCV	Trust for Conservation Volunteers
TECRU (SHU)	The Environment & Countryside Research Unit, Sheffield Hallam University
TIC	Tourist Information Centres
UFEX	Urban Fringe Management Experiment
UMEX	Upland Management Experiments
YOP	Youth Opportunities Programme

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1 The history and development of countryside management in Britain

There is a tide in the affairs of men.
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.
On such a full sea are we now afloat,
And we must take the current when it serves,
Or lose our ventures.

Brutus, *Julius Caesar*, Act 4, Scene 3, 218–224
(William Shakespeare, c.1599)

Summary

Countryside management services and projects represent one of the most successful and transformational public sector interventions in local planning processes since the 1950s. Yet their rise and now rapid decline, at least in the public sector, have been almost totally overlooked by planners and other decision-makers. This book draws on thirty years or more of observational and participatory action research, and on major reviews of the sector.

Chapter 1 sets the scene and context for the book, establishing the history and development of countryside management and the broad range of disciplines and professions that together form this unique sector. Furthermore, the diversity of actors and players in countryside management and associated activities, and the balance between public sector, NGOs, and private businesses are considered. In a society in which senior politicians speak of the ‘Big Society’ and ‘active citizenship’, it seems remarkable that the main mechanism for delivering such things, and with a record of accomplishment of success, of professional standards, and of value for money, is ending. Even more surprising perhaps is that this sector is being cut to the bone with barely a murmur with decades of good works undone. However, some impacts of public sector cuts with changed government were predicted (Rotherham, 2010).

The introduction provides an overview of issues and factors that drove the development of first National Parks and then Country Parks, Forest

Table 1.1 A time-line of key events in the development of countryside management

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>	<i>Significance</i>
1949	The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act	National Parks Commission (NPC) and the creation of National Parks, Nature Conservancy, AONBs, and the establishment of long-distance footpaths and more
1951	The Peak District became Britain's first National Park	
1968	Countryside Act	Establishment of Countryside Commission(s) Country Parks being designated and funded
1969	Upland Management Experiments (UMEX)	Pioneering testing of approaches; emergence of 'countryside management'
early 1970s	Urban Fringe Management Experiment (UFEX)	Tested new approaches in the Manchester Bollin Valley
1973	The Heritage Coasts initiative began	Three pilot projects: Purbeck, Suffolk, and Glamorgan
1973	Nature Conservancy becomes the Nature Conservancy Council	NCC was the United Kingdom agency responsible for designating and managing National Nature Reserves and other nature conservation areas between 1973 and 1991; excluding Northern Ireland
1973	Britain's entry into the EU/EEC	Huge implications for policy, grant aid, and legislation
1974	UFEX on a larger scale in the Metropolitan Green Belt of London at Barnet and at Havering	Extending the approach
1974	Local Government Act	Commission gained wide-ranging grant giving powers
1976	CoCo established regional offices	Restructuring of local government Beginning to develop programmes of urban-fringe work with local authorities
1975/76	34 urban-fringe projects supported	Moving beyond just project officer approaches of the early UMEX and UFEX projects
1977	Announcement by CoCo of move to larger-scale urban-fringe experiments to begin in 1980	Call for candidate local authorities led to the project established in the Metropolitan Borough of St Helens and Knowsley on Merseyside. Emergence of the Groundwork concept

1979	Election of the Conservative 'Thatcher' government with Michael Heseltine as Secretary of State for the Environment	Evolution of the public-private partnership of the Groundwork Trusts
1980	<i>World Conservation Strategy</i> published	Growing impetus for holistic action to solve environmental problems
1980s	Growth of local authority countryside services and urban-fringe project areas	Long-term implications for delivery; other processes and reviews followed throughout the period to the present
1981	Compulsory Competitive Tendering for local authority services	
1981	First Operation Groundwork formerly established	
1981	Wildlife and Countryside Act	Baseline legislation for years to come
1982	Urban riots in Toxteth and elsewhere	New focus on areas of urban deprivation and despoliation
1983	Groundwork model extended to other boroughs	
1987	Introduction of first agri-environment schemes in Britain	Led to Countryside Stewardship, Environment Stewardship, and Environmentally Sensitive Areas projects
1990	Town and Country Planning Act	Local authorities able to enter agreements with private landowners to minimise adverse impacts of developments on local communities
1990	The New National Forest and Community Forest Initiatives introduced by the Countryside Commission	Refocus of CoCo grant aid and support and emergence of ideas on urban forestry and sustainable woodlands
1990	Environmental Protection Act	
1991	Following the above and the Natural Heritage (Scotland) Act 1991, the Nature Conservancy Council split into three	Amalgamated with the Countryside Commission for Scotland, the Scottish part became Scottish Natural Heritage
	England retained the separate agencies of English Nature, and the Countryside Commission	Amalgamated with the Welsh part of the Countryside Commission for England and Wales, the Welsh part became the Countryside Council for Wales
	The Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) coordinated nature conservation between the three country agencies (and their equivalent in Northern Ireland)	

continued

Table 1.1 Continued

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>	<i>Significance</i>
1992	Scott Report on local authority delivery of countryside services	First in-depth assessment of achievement
1992	Rio 'Earth Summit'	Legacy of 'Agenda 21'
1992	European Habitats Directive	Convention of Biological Diversity
1994	National Lottery	Policy driver
1998	Regional Agencies Development Act	Increasing importance of Heritage Lottery and other grants
1998 onwards	Process of devolution of political authority from Westminster to Scotland and to Wales begun	Established the Countryside Agency by merging the Countryside Commission and the Rural Development Commission
2000	Countryside Rights of Way Act (CROW Act)	Major implications for delivery of countryside services and of consistency of national quality and standards
2000	European Water Framework Directive	Transformation and rationalisation of access to open countryside
2003	Haskins Review	Major policy implications yet to be fully realised
2004	Major consultation launched by Countryside Agency and Groundwork 'Unlocking the potential of the rural urban fringe'	Identified areas of disadvantage in rural sectors, and issues for government services
2006	Natural England established	Impacts limited by the move of CoAg to become part of Natural England and the subsequent effects of political and economic turmoil
2006	Britain signed the European Landscape Convention	CoAg and English Nature merged
2008	Global economic crisis and recession	Major policy implications
2010	UK general election and establishment of coalition government	Emergence of the new 'austerity' and ongoing deep cuts to government agencies and to local authorities
		Radical cuts to government and local government services and moves to do away with 'environmental red tape'

Parks, Countryside Management Areas and Projects, and countryside services. Origins in the forestry services of the Empire and the Commonwealth are explained in Chapter 13, as is the link to the North American Forest rangers and National Park rangers. The sometimes-uneasy relationships between nature reserves, nature conservation, and countryside management are explored, along with the emergence of Community Forest Projects and the New National Forest. Alongside services and projects, the growth of professional status, qualifications, training, and careers are noted, and so too is the rise of the non-governmental conservation sector such as the Wildlife Trusts, the Woodland Trust, the National Trust, the RSPB, and others. Again, in Chapter 13, the wider international influences and histories are discussed. From the perspective of research and understanding of the sector, one remarkable aspect is its almost complete absence from the standard literature on planning, housing, and community-related matters. The only significant statement on related matters was by Lavery (1982). Key texts, for example on UK housing policy and planning issues, such as Goodchild (2008), do not refer to these major policy interventions. This is even more surprising when planners working closely with local tenants' associations and others, led many countryside projects in the urban fringe.

Introduction

Early origins

It is often said that there is no such thing as a new 'good idea', and the concept of a countryside ranger falls into this category. Whilst today's countryside rangers, forest rangers and National Park rangers are of relatively recent origin, the idea goes back to early medieval times or before. In this context, and not so different from today, rangers were officials employed to 'range' through the countryside providing law and order. Originally, their tasks were limited to the enforcement of the Forest Laws and was enforced in the purlieu or lands of the Royal Forests. The term 'ranger' derived from the medieval Latin word 'regardatores' and this was noted in the 1217 Charter of the Forest, with appointments of rangers documented from the 1300s. The office of 'Ranger of Windsor Great Park', which continues to this day, was created in 1601 and the present Ranger is HRH Prince Philip.

Areas of mixed economic and social use, but with sporting and recreational activities subject to the Forest Laws, the Royal Forests were important in the British medieval landscape. Essentially, these gave precedence to royal ownership of hunting rights of defined beasts of the chase, to the king, and through the king to favoured aristocrats. The laws also addressed certain economic resource rights and particularly the right to take trees for timber. However, the forest was not a landscape set aside



Figure 1.1 Forest rangers, Germany, 1935.

for these purposes (as some parks were) but a multi-functional, economically driven countryside. As a contested space with different landowners, residents, and users, the forest required supervision and policing, just as modern countryside does. Specially appointed officials including those termed wardens or rangers undertook the supervision. Administration was complex and hierarchical, in the way that a contemporary National Park or local authority might be. Justices of the forest were the Justice in Eyre

and the verderers. The senior royal official was the Warden, often an eminent, busy landowner. In this case, the day-to-day powers were delegated to a deputy who supervised Foresters and Under-foresters (or Rangers). These latter officials were responsible for preserving the forest and game, and for apprehending offenders against the Forest Laws. Other officers included Agisters supervising pannage, agistment, and collecting fees. There was a Forest Constable and Foresters-in-fee (or Woodward). The Royal Forests also had Surveyors to agree and oversee the boundaries of the forest, and Regarders who provided advice to the Warden. The Forest Rangers were also termed the Patrollers of the purlieu (or land), and with Serjeants-in-fee, patrolled the forest, apprehended offenders, liaised with local communities, and generally administered the area. This system was largely abandoned as lands were 'improved' and deer hunting declined in popularity. With commons enclosed and commoners left to swell the ranks of the Victorian urban poor, the countryside was more-or-less closed to ordinary people. Rangers and similar posts morphed into gamekeepers employed to deter poachers and trespassers.

However, as described later, as Victorian industry fuelled massive growth in urban populations, demand for open spaces and recreational lands grew. By the late 1800s and early 1900s, the suburbs and wider countryside were dotted with urban parks with park keepers, landscaped country parks with parkers and gamekeepers, nature reserves with wardens, and forestry areas with foresters. It was from these beginnings that the countryside services we recognise today evolved. Furthermore, the evolution of the countryside professionals did not occur in isolation but against a backdrop of radical changes in politics, economics, society and the environment, the context for both need and demand (Rotherham, 2014).

Today's countryside officers

Local authority countryside services play crucial roles in providing a balance for competing demands for public access and recreation, visual and aesthetic quality, and wildlife and natural history interest of the area they cover (Bromley, 1990). Unfortunately, during times of financial austerity, countryside service teams take a lowly place in local government priorities (Seabrooke and Miles, 1993). Indeed, many aspects of government expenditure on environmental activities, including funding to government agencies, grants for conservation work, support to non-governmental organisations, and to local authority parks and countryside services, are easy to cut (Townsend, 2012).

Recent decisions made by central government to cut funding to local authorities mean that they in turn have had to, and continue to make, tough fiscal decisions. This is simply to bring about financial savings to balance their books, whilst maintaining supposedly 'frontline' or priority

services. Countryside management and associated services are seen as ‘soft options’ by comparison with, say, housing, health, or education. This was the case in the early 1990s, and it remains so today. These central government decisions inevitably mean service budget cuts, job losses and restructuring, or even axing of local authority countryside services. The NGOs pick up some of the challenges, but, even then, the work must be funded.

Economic austerity

Carnall (2013) reviewed the consequences of the economic austerity measures. In 2010, the UK coalition government presented its spending review that set out how it was to carry out its deficit reduction plan up to the financial year 2014–2015. This came at a time when the state was spending considerably more money than it raised in taxes and had to borrow at supposedly record levels, to meet the shortfall. The aim was to cut public spending by £81 billion over the following five years. Each government department had their budgets cut by an average 19 per cent over the review period (HM Treasury, 2010). The spending review was underpinned by a radical programme of public sector reforms, which claimed to focus on removing power from central government and redistributing it to local level. The aim was to build a ‘Big Society’ that supported communities, citizens, and volunteers in playing a bigger role in shaping provision and delivery of public services (HM Treasury, 2010). The three key elements to the Big Society agenda were described as community empowerment, opening up public services, and social action (Cabinet Office, undated).

However, the overall reduction in funding allocations from central government presented tough decisions to local authorities on how they deliver services. To make matters even worse, in June 2013, the government announced a further spending review outlining how the deficit would be further reduced. This meant an additional budget cut totalling £11.5 billion for the financial year 2015–2016 (HM Treasury, 2013) and additional challenges to local authorities. Despite claims of devolving powers and responsibilities to local government, the reality is that core services and skills have been axed to the extent that many environmental services now barely function, proactive planning has been emasculated, and support to local communities and charitable bodies withdrawn. Additional cuts of a further 10 per cent budget reduction to the Department for Communities and Local Government simply reinforced political ‘double-speak’. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs would also take a further 10 per cent cut, and a further loss of 144,000 public sector jobs within local authorities was predicted (BBC, 2013).

Over the period since the 1950s, the historical progression from the National Parks Commission, to the Countryside Commission to the Countryside Agency has resulted in numerous and frequent changes in remits and emphasis of project delivery. The amount of associated legislation and

policy discussion in these decades was notable and restructuring and reorganisation continue to this day. Consequently, many people today take things like access to the countryside for granted. Along with this, the protection of countryside areas, especially the Green Belt or National Parks, is an assumed state of affairs. Within a broader sweep of society, there are notable communities, such as ethnic minority groups, who are often excluded from or even unaware of the opportunities for countryside leisure. Furthermore, technological advances and the demands of an increasingly urban society have changed demographics, behaviour, rural landscapes, and countryside use.

The evolution of countryside services

Until the 1970s, nature conservation in Britain was mainly a rural activity with little interest in the urban environment. However, with a combination of ever-growing towns and cities but also a vast legacy of despoiled and derelict post-industrial land, this situation began to change. The government at that time became increasingly interested in revitalising inner-city areas and providing more greenspaces, both in the towns and cities but also beyond them, in the countryside. The government body responsible for conservation of wildlife and nature and with a role across the whole of England, Wales, and Scotland, was the Nature Conservancy Council (NCC). Senior officers in the NCC recognised that nature conservation in towns and cities was all about getting people involved and enabling them to make the most of the opportunities on offer (Marren, 2002). However, at the same time, the National Parks Commission was looking to widen its own brief beyond the parks in the countryside. Established under the Countryside Act (1968), the Countryside Commission took up this challenge of addressing both the wider countryside and the urban public who now wished to recreate in it. The Countryside Commission led this in England and Wales with the Countryside Commission for Scotland responsible north of the border.

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, following its establishment under the Act, the Countryside Commission began to develop concepts of countryside management (Bromley, 1990). In 1969, they started piloting upland management experiments to test the ideas of positive area management. The main aim was to reconcile conflicts between farmers and recreation activities. This was achieved by making small grants available to farmers to allow them both to enhance the appearance of the landscape and to develop recreational opportunities. The key to success was the appointment of a specific project officer with the independence to identify the work needed and the ability to get the work done within the confines of a modest budget (Glyptis, 1991; Green, 2002).

It was suggested by the Countryside Commission that the area management approach was the way forward and this method was extended to the

urban-fringe area (Glyptis, 1991). The Countryside Commission (1981a) described the urban fringe as the inner zone of the Green Belt, neither town nor countryside, but the transitional zone between the two. It is a limited and especially valuable resource where competing demands create problems and conflict of interest. For a farmer or other landowner, this land is simply a place of work, but problems of trespass and vandalism make it difficult to farm successfully. To a city dweller, it is often their closest accessible greenspace. Today, for example, being the area where Country Parks are generally located, it is widely accepted that the urban fringe should provide informal recreation opportunities to the adjacent urban population. However, to a developer it presents opportunities to build new housing, retail, and industrial sites. In so doing, the urban area expands to 'grey the green' and expand the body odour of the city. With the urban fringe spreading outwards, countryside retreats as farming becomes unviable.

The emphasis of planning and Countryside Commission policies in the urban fringe was to reduce conflicts of interest, promote cooperation between stakeholders, and encourage positive use of the urban fringe. Experimental schemes were established which involved conserving and enhancing landscape character and the wildlife of the urban fringe. The projects were successful in pulling in local authorities and conservation volunteers to undertake practical tasks and demonstrated how local resources could be harnessed to carry out environmental improvements. Like the upland management schemes that went before, the key figure was the project officer who had to negotiate mutual respect and practical compromises between the private landowners and the wider public interest (Glyptis, 1991; Green, 1996). Above all, they sought to improve public access, and authorities such as Hampshire County Council and Cheshire County Council, for example, pursued policies of land acquisition to help achieve their aims.

The success of the early pilot schemes resulted in the development of a large number of additional schemes (Glyptis, 1991). Some of the projects evolved and took longer-term responsibility for land management (Dwyer and Hodge, 1996). Indeed, countryside management services of many urban local authorities around Great Britain evolved from urban-fringe experiments. By the early millennium, a considerable amount of the responsibility for planning and management of countryside lay with local authorities. The countryside management teams undertook many statutory functions and duties, often including overseeing local planning issues, and conservation of nature and biodiversity. They had key roles in providing access to and provision of countryside recreation facilities and Public Rights of Way (Cope *et al.*, 2000; Sharpley, 2003). Reorganisation of local government in 1974 helped provide an impetus for County Councils to promote footpaths, access, and Country Parks. A major drive was to improve countryside access and this continued through the 1990s in the

build-up to the Countryside Rights of Way Act (CROW Act). Garrod and Whitby (2005, p. 16) defined the process of countryside management as: 'The manipulation of countryside resources and situations, often with incomplete information, to provide a sustainable supply of the countryside goods demanded by stakeholders.'

Deciding what is 'sustainable' is a tricky balancing act, but the core functions that define countryside management included provision of Country Parks, Countryside Management Areas, and other site management activities. Other works included Public Rights of Way and access, contributing to maintenance of the landscape and wider rural environment (including heritage and wildlife), delivery of Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) management plans, and much more. Activities included provision of biodiversity and nature conservation functions, often in collaboration with specialist ecology advisors, and landscape and environmental policy functions, with the same, and with archaeological specialists. Many services take on urban greenspace functions and historic environment functions (Rotherham *et al.*, 2006c, 2006d, 2006e). During the 1990s, the Countryside Agency invested heavily in AONBs.

Operational structures within local authorities delivering these functions varied across different authorities, most having specialist recreation and leisure service departments charged with managing recreational facilities (Seabrooke and Miles, 1993). Many established specialist countryside service teams with the responsibility for countryside management. Again, the structure within these teams varied, but frequently included a ranger service providing site-specific management and onsite points of contact for the public. They can also include interpretation teams, producing interpretation material, running activities, and delivering environmental education (Bromley, 1990).

Many local authorities developed environmental policies to support management. In addition, partnerships were established between local authorities, businesses, and local people with a focus of developing sustainable and attractive environments (Marren, 2002); examples are given later.

Context: National Parks and before

A land locked away

Precipitated by the Industrial Revolution, the accelerating processes of urbanisation, agricultural modernisation, and nineteenth-century technological advances resulted in dramatic changes across British society and the countryside. These altered how countryside was managed and the manner in which landscape and wildlife were perceived. Previously for most people, just a utilitarian place in which to live and work, for urban populations the countryside now offered temporary release from cramped,

dirty towns and cities. However, a consequence of agricultural revolution, the enclosure of commons, removed the most obvious countryside accessible for recreation by the urban masses. Furthermore, the commons of the uplands, whilst mostly maintained, became private, kepted grouse moors, strictly out of bounds to ordinary people. During the 1700s and 1800s, enclosure awards and other mechanisms removed the commons from the commoner. However, aside from the wealthy gentry and increasingly affluent urban, educated middle classes, most people had little time for recreation and certainly not for holidays involving travel away from home. At this time, the commoner required common land for utilitarian purposes of survival. By the late 1700s and early 1800s, the wealthy and the educated undertook travel and tours to raise their awareness and to gain appreciation of the picturesque and the romantic. Across Britain, countryside visiting became *de rigueur*, but only for the privileged few. Grand houses and landscaped parks welcomed tourists, but only those of a higher class and level of discernment. Yet by the mid to late 1800s, the 'Commons, Open Spaces and Footpaths Preservation Society', was established as Britain's oldest conservation body, campaigning to protect common land, village greens, and public paths, and the right to enjoy them. In the London suburbs, further attempts to enclose and destroy commons were resisted, if necessary, with violence. The denial of access to the ordinary people was the issue taken up by Marion Shoard in 1980 and 1987, and it was not effectively resolved until the year 2000.

By the late 1800s, with growing urban populations often locked in dirty, grime-ridden cities, demand for access to the countryside was growing. The urban-rural interface was becoming a contested space, between gamekeeper and poacher, between landowner and trespasser, between sports and pastimes of the landed gentry, and those of ordinary people. Increasingly, politicians began to take note of the changes and the pressures, and as the Labour movement emerged, there was a mood for genuine action. The Rural Development Commission, set up in 1909, informed government on rural activity. Then, from this beginning, in 1929, the National Parks Committee was set up to consider the protection of landscapes and increased demand for rural recreation. With rambling growing in popularity, mass trespasses in the Peak District highlighted the demands for public access to the countryside. The 1942 'Scott' Committee recommended establishing National Parks and implementing major changes in agricultural production, in part influenced by wartime demand. The 1947 Agricultural Act, and 1947 Town and Country Planning Act, introduced changes to rural landscapes through agricultural subsidy regimes and an implicit Green Belt policy respectively. The Nature Conservancy Council was established in 1948, with powers to designate nature reserves and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).

In 1949, the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act was passed, resulting in the formation of the National Parks Commission



(a)



(b)

Figure 1.2 (a) National Park ranger, USA, 1950s, and (b) a ranger's home.

(NPC) and the creation of National Parks, AONBs, and the establishment of long-distance footpaths (e.g. the Pennine Way). The Act also required County Councils to survey and map all 'Public Rights of Way', so creating Definitive Rights of Way Maps. In 1951, the Peak District became Britain's first National Park, and the NPC established ten National Parks by 1957. The NPC encouraged conservation and landscape protection, whilst recognising the demands of agricultural production. Also considered important, recreation was to be encouraged through the development of visitor centres and ranger services. The National Park Ranger Services owed much of their style and appearance to a legacy of both the long-standing forestry services, in Britain and the Empire, with uniforms and badges. Models for such delivery were the North American National Parks Service and the Forestry Services there and across Europe. Many such organisations owed their structures and appearances to quasi-military styles adopted internationally, with officers, ranks, and, in European countries for example, arms. National Park rangers' vehicles were instantly recognisable with the service name and the appropriate logos, and the rangers had armbands and uniforms. Even officers of the Nature Conservancy (later the Nature Conservancy Council), and by the 1970s, of the Countryside Commission, had distinctive uniforms. NCC National Nature Reserve wardens, Countryside Commission-sponsored rangers and project officers had standardised garb.

The invasion of the masses

In part, the 1949 Act provided protection for natural and heritage resources, and enhanced opportunities for recreation. However, with increasing affluence, and especially mobility through the motor car, there were concerns about precious countryside assets over-run by recreation-seeking urban masses. Those responsible for conservation and for land management generally, felt increased public affluence and private transport in the 1960s was raising issues of rising public demand and access within the countryside. With much of the countryside historically a contested space, this produced conflicts of interest between recreation and conservation within National Parks. Furthermore, there were issues of visitor management in the wider countryside as rural recreation increased in popularity during the second half of the twentieth century.

Numerous texts cover the growth of recreational walking or rambling, and whilst this is central to the theme of the present book, space precludes a detailed account. However, McKay (2013) and Hollett (2002), for example, provide excellent accounts of the history of the demand for access and recreational space in Britain. One aspect often neglected is the fear of the countryside swamped and overwhelmed by hordes of uncouth urban dwellers. Joad in the 1930s and 1940s (Joad, 1934, 1945) stated this evocatively, in many ways exemplifying issues of conflicts and contested



Figure 1.3 Posters of the Ranger Naturalist Service (a) Lassen Volcanic Park, USA, and (b) Yellowstone National Park, USA.

spaces which countryside management sought to resolve. One issue stated repeatedly was the concern that countryside might become a mock of the real thing, a museum for visitors, rather than a real, working landscape populated by rural people.

Countryside Commission

With the 1968 Countryside Act, the Countryside Commission replaced the NPC. It had an expanded, countrywide remit for countryside protection and recreational opportunities. In conjunction with local authorities, to stop the hordes, the Countryside Commission established Country Parks for recreation and leisure purposes. With visitor facilities, Country Parks offered managed countryside experiences without the need to travel long distances to National Parks. The Countryside Commission continued the establishment of long-distance trails, and later noted that the existing 135,000 miles (216,000 km) of Public Rights of Way were one of the most important means of access into the rural landscape. In 1973, the Heritage Coasts initiative began with three pilot projects at Purbeck, Suffolk, and, the first to be dedicated, Glamorgan.

With increasing demand for public access, leisure and recreation, changing agricultural impacts on the landscape, and increasing concerns

for wildlife and overall environmental welfare, the Countryside Commission introduced the idea of 'countryside management'. This was a means of reconciling multiple countryside demands, first, in the wider countryside and then the urban-rural fringe. The 1972 Local Government Act was significant in allowing the Countryside Commission to provide grant aid to local authorities and others delivering countryside services. Importantly, too, the approach encouraged a degree of experimentation in order to solve intransigent problems.

Countryside management

As a concept, 'countryside management' was to benefit all concerned parties (public, landowners, local authorities, NGOs, etc.). Successful Upland Management Experiments (UMEX) in Snowdonia and the Lake District, commencing in 1969, led to countryside management projects being adopted in National Parks and coastal regions. The concept (as UFEX), was then introduced to selected Green Belt urban-fringe areas (Bollin Valley near Manchester, and Barnet and Haverling in London). This experimental and demonstration approach was characteristic of the methods of the Commission. Once the idea had been tested, with demonstration projects adopted and documented, their success led to local authorities taking up the challenge with pump priming from the Commission. The UMEX projects were significant in introducing the idea of funding for a project officer, a later cornerstone of the countryside management projects.

The greatest use of countryside management amongst local authorities was initially associated with areas of high user demand adjacent to areas of urban fringe. This included former, often derelict, industrial areas requiring remediation and landscape restoration. Employment of rangers ensured local knowledge and an understanding of local issues and requirements. The Association of Countryside Rangers was established and was significant in encouraging the spread of knowledge and experience between countryside management services (CMS). By the 1970s, centres such as the Peak District National Park Centre at Losehill Hall, in Derbyshire, grant aided by the Countryside Commission, were providing intensive professional training for rangers and countryside managers, in Britain and even globally. Information on management and policy issues could be rolled out quickly and networked effectively.

With countryside management used to maintain access routes, fencing, and associated infrastructure, increased visitor demand in rural areas during the 1980s and 1990s saw its spread countrywide. Scott (1992) identified 109 countryside management services in 1989/1990. In assessing countryside management in 1990, Scott judged the concept an overall success, providing value for money, enhancing public enjoyment of the countryside, and being a major component in the delivery of countryside

objectives. In order to improve the delivery of countryside management services, Scott also suggested streamlining and rationalising of countryside services and projects to reduce confusion. The report noted the need for training to retain and motivate staff, and to secure commitment to long-term project funding.

Countryside management services in local authorities did not evolve in isolation. In nature conservation, the Wildlife Trusts and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds were growing in numbers, stature, influence, and professionalism to reflect a rising tide of concern and enthusiasm. Following from the UMEX projects, but specifically dedicated to improvements in despoiled landscapes, in 1979 the Countryside Commission established the Groundwork Trust (see Menzies and Barton, 2012). With a focus on improving environmentally degraded areas and encouraging employment, this hugely significant initiative targeted urban environments. Groundwork adopted similar principles to countryside management with the aim of encouraging countryside access through the improvement of degraded landscapes. Groundwork now operates as Groundwork UK, with forty-eight individual Groundwork Trusts across the UK. At the same time, the explosion in urban wildlife groups also reflected a demand for conservation close to home.

During its tenure, the Countryside Commission established numerous initiatives designed to maximise rural recreation benefits whilst reducing negative impacts. As a means of mitigating agricultural environmental damage, the Countryside Commission offered landowners alternatives to Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) production requirements, in the form of Countryside Stewardship Schemes. Agri-environment schemes have operated in the UK since 1987, with the Countryside Premium Scheme, and the Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA) Schemes. First introduced in 1987, the ESA Schemes were followed by the Organic Aid Scheme (1994) and the Countryside Premium Scheme (CPS) (1997). Emerging from the EU Agri-Environment Regulation (one of the 1992 CAP reform agreements), the countryside schemes (Countryside Stewardship (England), Tir Cymen (Wales), Countryside Premium Scheme (Scotland)) incorporated a number of pre-1996 schemes. These were some of the several voluntary schemes open to farmers from 1997 to 2000. In 2001, in Scotland the Rural Stewardship Scheme superseded them, in England, Environmental Stewardship. By the end of the year 2000, all ESAs and the CPS closed to new applications and the Rural Stewardship Scheme was introduced in 2001 as their successor in Scotland, with Environmental Stewardship in England and Wales from 2005. The Countryside Stewardship Scheme, set up in 1991, was an agri-environment scheme run by the UK government. Originally introduced as a five-year pilot project by the Countryside Commission, the scheme in England aimed to improve environmental value of farmland. Administration of the scheme passed to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) in 1996, with the