



SOUTH WEST PEAK LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP

FINAL PROJECT REPORT

Name of Project	Better Outside
Delivery Partner	PDNPA
Name of Person Completing Report	Karen Shelley-Jones
Start Date of Project	January 2018
End Date of Project	June 2022
Date of Report	June 2022



Aims and Objectives of the Project

The stated aims of Better Outside were to widen access to heritage and improve the quality of the visitor experience. In developing the project plan we brought together health professionals, voluntary sector organisations concerned with promoting accessibility, members of the Local Access Forum and local authorities to help advise the partnership on how to improve access to the South West Peak, whilst removing barriers for people living with health inequalities.

Following consultation in the development phase, we identified two former railway tracks within the South West Peak which had the potential to form a valued part of the linear network for multiple users. By virtue of their nature these could offer accessible routes suitable for everyone no matter their level of ability, giving them the opportunity to access the countryside and benefit from it. Together these routes had the potential to be promoted and branded along with other existing routes within the National Park’s ‘Miles without Stiles’ initiative. These routes would help open up the possibilities for those with physical disabilities, but also benefit many people who might experience some form of restriction in their physical activity, such as older people or those managing long term health conditions.

Capital works and improvements to routes were scheduled to be followed by the development and delivery of a programme of activity, designed to improve health and initiate behaviour change amongst target groups. Ultimately the project intended to connect people with the iconic landscapes of the South West Peak, supporting them to feel all of the benefits that this high quality natural environment has to offer.

Better Outside was an area-wide project to not only improve access to the South West Peak, but to raise awareness of heritage features and build a wider appreciation of them, leading to a better understanding and desire to protect and care for them.

Volunteers would be trained to facilitate access to specific natural and cultural heritage features. Routes would be interpreted on the ground to ensure that all visitors have a better understanding and appreciation of the heritage features of the South West Peak.

Project Delivery

Unfortunately only part of the intended project has been delivered. It was our intention to make improvements to two routes in the Goyt valley – Fernilee Reservoir and Goyts Lane, only the first of these routes has been completed.

Staff resource

There was no dedicated staff resource to deliver this project, the intention was to deliver the outputs by working with existing members of staff at the Peak District National Park Authority, notably the Recreation Strategy Officer. Unfortunately, due to organisational re-structuring, this post was dis-established between submitting our Landscape Conservation Action Plan and commencing our delivery phase. It fell to the Scheme Manager to deliver the project drawing on input, within existing capacity, from other colleagues at the PDNPA.

Budget resource

The initial planned project budget for Better Outside was £109,100 which was subdivided as follows, showing planned and actual costs incurred against each NLHF budget heading:

NLHF budget heading	Example items	Intended	Actual
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		cost	cost
New building work	Trail resurfacing and repairs	£51,300	£29,016
Other costs (capital)	Interpretation panels and benches	£13,800	£4,606
Professional fees (capital)	Contractor fees for route upgrades	£31,000	£24,472
Training for volunteers		£3,000	£1,000
Travel and expenses for volunteers		£2,000	£1,000
Publicity and promotion	Promotional films	£1,000	£0
Evaluation	Survey of users	£2,000	£0
Contingency		£5,000	£0
TOTAL		£109,100	£60,095

The project was funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund, Tarmac Landfill Communities Fund and United Utilities.

Partnership working – team involvement, steering group etc

The project was delivered by PDNPA working with the landowner and SWPLPS partner United Utilities at Fernilee Reservoir. No project steering group was established. Input from the staff team was given to install benches along the Fernilee Reservoir route and to liaise with stakeholders around interpretation proposals. The project worked closely with the Future Custodians project through the SWPLPS Vocational Training Officer who secured a contract with Staffordshire County Council to work with our apprentice team to identify faulty and damaged stiles and replace them with easier access wicket gates on public rights of way.

Volunteers

A volunteer day was organised with Tarmac staff to help with installation of benches along the Fernilee Reservoir route. Volunteers also helped to replace stiles with wicket gates in various locations.

Consultants and contractors

The route improvements were carried out by contractors procured via invitation to tender. Their tender was evaluated against set criteria of price, quality and experience.

Community involvement

Stakeholders and users were consulted during the project development phase to identify the most suitable routes and the factors to consider in their improvement.

What Has (and has not) Been Achieved

Outputs

The intended and delivered outputs of the project were:

	Intended Output	Delivered Output
1	3280m surfacing upgraded on 2 existing routes	1332m surfacing upgraded for public access plus 330m access road (total 1662m)
2	2 routes will be upgraded and promoted for access for all	1 route upgraded and promoted on PDNPA Miles without Stiles webpage.
3	10 stiles replaced with wicket gates	27 stiles replaced with gates or gates repaired in collaboration with the Future Custodians project.
4	20 days volunteer time at skilled rate	6 volunteer days were given for the Fernilee benches and 17 volunteer days for gate installation
5	3 volunteers trained to have a deeper appreciation of barriers facing people living with health inequalities.	0 – this was not met due to staff capacity issues
6	5 interpretive features installed	3 interpretation panels in production

Key Outputs

The key outputs for this project were improved access via re-surfaced routes and replacement of stiles with wicket gates. There are few opportunities in the South West Peak for level easy access routes due to the terrain, so these improvements are notable for the area. Whilst replacing stiles with wicket gates does not enable ‘Access For All’ it does make access easier for many people.

Outcomes

The intended and delivered outcomes of this project were:

	Intended Outcome	Delivered Outcome
1	More people from under-represented audiences (people with health inequalities, people from BME communities) are using the 2 upgraded routes	The Fernilee Reservoir route has definitely seen more people using it, we have not been able to carry out formal monitoring, but anecdotal reports are of more use by families and people with mobility difficulties.
2	More people are engaging positively with heritage as a result of using the routes. Target user groups (people with health inequalities and BME communities) will be supported by Mosaic Community Champions to use these routes.	Mosaic community champions from Peak District Mosaic and SWP Mosaic joined together for a walk in the Goyt Valley, including the route along Fernilee Reservoir, to celebrate the 70 th Anniversary of the Peak District National Park.
3	Trained volunteers have a deeper appreciation of barriers facing people living with health inequalities.	This was not achieved due to lack of staff capacity.
4	Appropriate on and off-site interpretation will promote the benefits of quiet enjoyment	2 interpretation panels were designed for Fernilee Reservoir and 1 for Goyts Lane.

of the countryside & tell the story of the landscape in the Goyt Valley.

An online talk was given by volunteer David Stirling entitled 'The Goyt Valley – a journey through time'

Key Outcomes

The most important outcome has been improving access to a wider range of people to parts of the countryside.

Feedback received via our website:

"I have walked around Fernilee Reservoir with great enjoyment for over 30 years. I was delighted to see the work being started on the footpath and wonder if this could possibly be extended to include a few more steps at the Errwood end of the woodland path. I am aged 81 and hope to walk around Fernilee on a regular basis for several more years – maybe 10!"

There were polite requests from two families to install small memorial plaques for lost family members on two of the new benches which they duly did. This was a poignant reminder of how important accessible green space is for people, for many reasons.

What Made The Difference

Assistance from other team members, especially our Vocational Training officer and team of Countryside Worker apprentices who repaired and installed benches and helped deliver some of the necessary remediation works to the top surface of the route at Fernilee Reservoir.

Challenges

The main challenge for this project was not having a dedicated staff resource to deliver it.

The main challenges experienced at Fernilee Reservoir were:

- Working with imported materials beside a drinking water reservoir has challenges with regards ensuring there is no potential contamination.
- Services including gas main, water main, and electricity line were all present on site and had to be carefully risk assessed, requiring liaison with the relevant service providers.
- Challenge of achieving the desired route surface given the nature of the material and restrictions on surface rolling.
- It was difficult to install access gates that enabled access by pedestrians and disabled users whilst restricting access to unauthorised users such as motorcycles.
- The proximity to two large towns and the improved surface has increased users, which means that existing car park provision is often inadequate. We now intend to demarcate specific disabled parking bays on site. We are also looking at developing additional easy access routes in the area.
- Lead in time and cost were greater than initially anticipated.

Not all users of the Fernilee Reservoir route were happy with the improvements. We received negative feedback from cyclists who did not like the new kissing gates because they couldn't get their bicycles through, as below:

"Been using the trail beside Fernilee for years, it's ace and so useful. Was really pleased to see the improvement to surface and big thanks for that. HOWEVER-

The new gates are awful! We used to be able to cycle through here with the kids trailer, because it just had standard gates. Now these awful kissing type gates have appeared that won't even fit my standard mountain bike through. When we first discovered them we had the trailer and had to take the whole thing apart, lift it all over, what a nightmare. I don't understand how an access project can make access more difficult?

I think the gates can be used by wheelchairs with a key? But has it been considered people might be using a chair but not immediately have access to these? I was in a chair briefly last year and wouldn't have been able to access. That's just terrible.

Please just remove the awful kissing gates and put normal bridleway gates back in! Chatted to a dog walker yesterday who agreed the same, especially as you have to touch the kissing gates to get through. Seems there was no consultation with path users on this either? Don't horses use the path to?

Please change it back."

In actual fact the gates do not require a key for normal operation, and it would appear that some user(s) may have modified the gates after installation so that they no longer functioned properly and the kissing gate element was bypassed. This actually made the gates more difficult for some users. At the time of writing this report we are exploring alternative options.

The challenges associated with the second planned route at Goyts Lane were:

- The Scheme Manager had responsibility for delivering the improvements to this route, and due to the workload associated with managing the programme and staff team, was unable to devote sufficient time to managing this project.
- Two attempts to let a project management contract to take on overall responsibility for design and delivery failed to attract interest.
- Insufficient capacity amongst staff at the PDNPA to provide assistance, despite this being raised as an issue with the Senior Management Team in the planning stage.

Case Studies

See attached case study for Fernilee Reservoir.

Legacy

Skills/knowledge/experience

The SWPLPS staff working on this project have gained skills in contractor management, working within the constraints presented by working beside a drinking water reservoir and alongside a high pressure gas main. Also, the Vocational Training Officer and our Countryside Worker apprentices and volunteers gained new skills in rights of way improvement works, these were very useful for one of our apprentices who has since gone onto employment where this is a notable element of her new role.

Capital Works

As a result of the project the following capital works items are making Fernilee Reservoir and other parts of the South West Peak more accessible to a wider range of people:

- 1662m improved accessible off-road route for pedestrian and wheelchair users.
- 3 new benches installed and 4 refurbished.
- 2 new accessible gates installed.
- 27 wooden or stone stiles repaired or replaced with wooden wicket gates on public rights of way and footpaths around the South West Peak.

Educational Resources/Other Resources

Three interpretation panels have been produced and installed in the Goyt Valley, focusing on the industrial and cultural heritage of the reservoir valley. These are also available online.

Lessons Learned

If this type of project were to be delivered again I would plan in the development phase to have the whole project delivered as a contract, taking on a landscape architect (or similar) to design the route improvements and draw up detailed specifications, let tenders to contractors and sign off the work.

The Big Headline

Muddy reservoir walk made enjoyable for a wider range of users.