

How to champion outdoor recreation

Know what's on your doorstep - how many green spaces or areas of open countryside are in your constituency? What is your local path network like? What are the popular outdoor activities? Are there any issues with these activities? How many outdoor providers operate in your area and how many people do they introduce to the outdoors each year?

Support National Governing Bodies (NGBs) - there is tremendous potential for NGBs to help educate and engage users & providers to drive participation. Go for a walk or a climb with the British Mountaineering Council (BMC) and other bodies, and help promote and understand the benefits of outdoor recreation.

Support local and national initiatives which encourage more people to get active outdoors - the BMC offers many subsidised hill walking and climbing courses as well as festivals and outdoor weeks dedicated to getting people outdoors. Working with local BME communities, the BMC is also running taster sessions that engage these groups and spark their interest in getting active outdoors.

Find out what activity groups / clubs operate in your constituency - there are around 300 climbing, hill walking and mountaineering clubs in England and Wales affiliated to the BMC for instance. Clubs have 'Meet Programmes' happening throughout the year ranging from an evening at a local venue to a month in the Himalayas.

Join the Mountaineering APPG and the APPG for Sport - stay connected with key organisations and like-minded parliamentarians and find out about current issues affecting outdoor recreation.

All-Party Parliamentary Group for Mountaineering

Purpose - To promote the sporting and recreational interests of climbers, hill walkers and mountaineers; to raise awareness of the physical and social benefits of mountaineering; and to campaign for sustainable access to cliffs, mountains and open countryside.

All-Party Parliamentary Group for Sport

Purpose - To be the central, constructive, cross-party voice for sport in Parliament.

More information

Mountaineering APPG

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HOW TO CHAMPION OUTDOOR RECREATION IN YOUR CONSTITUENCY



We want to help MPs and Peers to become champions for outdoor recreation and assist more people to get active outdoors. The benefits of outdoor recreation to health, wellbeing and the economy are clear and government departments need to work together to maximise the potential.

What is outdoor recreation?

Outdoor recreation refers to any physical activity taking place in the natural environment - there is no court or pitch, no team or referee.

Why support outdoor recreation?

Contribution to Government aims:

- Outdoor recreation is well placed to help achieve government's key outcomes around physical and mental wellbeing, as well as social, community and economic development;
- Outdoor recreation contributes significantly to the tourist economy;
- Outdoor recreation has a huge role to play in achieving greater enjoyment of the natural environment;
- Outdoor recreation can significantly contribute to tackling inactivity across the life course.

Millions of people are active outdoors and more want to be:

- 8.96m people are active outdoors; whether walking, cycling, running, exploring, climbing or visiting our National Parks and other open spaces. 2.5million (28%) of these are regularly active (once per week or more);
- 18.2 million people not currently active outdoors want to re-engage and participate in the next 12 months;
- Initiatives for young people such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) have experienced year on year growth;
- The Mountain Training Association (MTA) has grown 15% in the last 12 months, demonstrating an example of the growth in independent outdoor providers of which there are over 9,600 in England.

Obvious benefits to public health:

- Physical inactivity is the fourth largest cause of disease and disability in the UK;
- Physical inactivity is costing the UK an estimated £7.4 billion a year.

Value to the UK economy:

- For every £1 the government invests in sport and recreation it gets £5 back;
- People spending their day enjoying outdoor recreation spent £21 billion in 2012/13 - and when you factor in overnight visits this comes to £27 billion;
- Walking tourism alone supports up to 245,500 full-time equivalent jobs;
- The climbing, mountaineering and walking sector alone is worth £2.3bn;
- There is a relatively high return on investment to be gained from the development of informal outdoor facilities such as bike trails and the path network which impact on many more participants over a greater time span.

Help break down barriers for under-represented groups:

- BME & urban population groups tend to have less access to a car and 69% of visits are often near to home and in more urban locations where there are fewer local green spaces;
- Males tend to be more active outdoors than females (70% of hill walkers are male).

Outdoor recreation is free to everyone:

- There are now 865,000 hectares of 'open access' land where people can roam, walk and climb freely (this includes mountains, moors, heaths and downs and registered common land);
- England has a 140,000-mile network of footpaths, bridleways and byways;
- Natural England is rolling out the England Coast Path and associated margin of access land. Outdoor recreational activities make the most of these unique assets.

Reference sources & further information

Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation (DCMS, 2015)
Creating a great place for living: Defra's strategy to 2020 (Defra, 2016)
Everybody active, every day (Public Health England, 2014)
Towards an Active Nation (Sport England Strategy 2016-2021)
Getting Active Outdoors (Sport England, 2015)
Reconomics (Sport and Recreation Alliance, 2014)