SOAN Networking Day, 6th June 2018

Creating Better Access for Everyone

Rowena Colpitts, Sustrans

* Inclusive design aims to remove the barriers that create undue effort and separation, enabling everyone to participate equally and confidently in everday aqctivies.
* meeting access needs should be an integral part of every day
* Equality Act 2010, I would urge everyone who hasn't had disability training to go and do it
* more people are living longer, but spending more years in ill health
* most common disabilities are mental and musculoskeletal, over 20% of the UK population has a disability
* disability can be variable, also difficult to define
* enjoying the outdoors is key to assisting the management of mental and physical health
* social inclusion, the Purple Pound

Kevin Lafferty, Forestry Commission Scotland

* project looked at what we can do to improve accessibility, make it easier for people to enjoy the outdoors
* looked at who visits the forest estate - white, middle class, dogwalkers - how do we get more children, young people
* what we thought was fully accessible was not always so
* careful design and improvements, regular maintenance and appropriate interpretation will allow least restrictive access
* if it is fit for Granny, it is suitable for everyone
* we need to provide the information so people can make informed decision for themselves
* off site information is just as important as on site, lack of public transport can mean people are not able to come
* we tried to put ourselves in other people's shoes - used wheelchairs, visual impairment goggles - gives you an entirely different perspective on a site you might know. I recommend such a practical training programme on site
* we have to recognise that some of our routes will never be accessible, so aim to make your best experience accessible
* there are number of groups not using the outdoors - age, gender, class, social, cultural, lifestyle
* don't rely on the contractor understanding what you want. Walk the Talk with them
* see this as a long term commitment

Bridge Jones, Scottish Natural Heritage

* 29 Great Trails
* multi-use accessibility, ie horse riders, cyclists, adapted vehicles, adapted bikes
* SNH audit came primarily from British Horse Society needing more information
* a gathering of facts, identifying barriers and looking at good practice
* biggest issue was styles and gates
* also looked at signage which can lead to perceived barriers (eg, sign showing walkers, but not horses)
* report, "Multi Use Audit of Scotland's Great Trails" is not yet published.

Q&A session

* How does the Forestry Commission recruit their Community Champions? There is an engagement strategy, want to get better representation so we go out and work with groups like black and ethnic minorities, give them basic introductory training. We want people to get employment through this route. Needs an individual to manage the programme
* Could other groups put money into this to give people a career progression rather than a voluntary burden
* There have been a lot of audits but they are not very well shared, we need to get these out sooner rather than later. They have been used internally. There are lots of similarities.
* Access officers are asked for this information, but are relying on local knowledge, all the information in one place would be helpful.
* We need all paths on maps, multi-use/all abilities, difference is in the fine detail
* What's the future? Street View. Forestry Commission is refreshing information to be sure it is up to date and informed, working with people like Disabled Go to ensure you are providing comprehensive information
* Consistency, helps if we are all using the same approach, same format

Zoe McLean, North Ayrshire Council

* helping promote accessibility to the wider public, making people aware of the issues faced on a day to day basis
* it is only truly accessible if it can be accessed independently
* what might seem to you a non significant change can make all the difference in the world to someone who has never accessed that path before
* consult with people before you design something in order to avoid possible stumbling blocks later on
* acknowledge that the end user is important and that they have the most experience
* need different methods of feedback, perhaps a discussion for someone with a visual impairment
* websites need to be accessible to those with a visual or sensory impairment
* give voluntary organisations the importance and the credit they deserve
* consult with as many groups as possible early on
* provide a range of ways to enable interested parties to take part in the consultation process
* there is an access panel network, also Euan's Guide and Glasgow Disability Alliance, but should we have an advice network so people can get the information they need?

Avril McKenzie, Living Streets

* the streets are for everyone
* bad design can stop you doing everyday things, mean you can't go out independently or enjoy the outdoors
* we want to enable and encourage walking on safe streets, make it the natural choice for everyday trips, make the streets safe and appealing
* did a project with Perth & Kinross Council after issues were raised with the council by vulnerable pedestrians
* street audit workshop led to setting up a partnership and arranging audits
* talk to those who live on and use the streets
* identify barriers, also good things to build on
* major advantage for us was the engagement with the client on site, gave them further understanding of the things affecting the local community. Engineers were made aware that minor obstacles can become major hazards
* good to acknowledge responses and build good relationships

Paul Ruffles, Sustrans

* street design case study
* visual impairment is a broad term
* tonal difference on pavements and roads
* functional is more important than aesthetic for distinguishing street furniture
* tactile delineation, if you can step over it, it is not effective, must be wide
* kerbs can be used for navigation. 60mm can be detected by a cane, 100mm better for those using a guide dog as they can feel the dog going down
* giving greater priority to walkers means changing the mindset of drivers
* you have to ask people how to make a place feel safe
* good design is context led, not issue focussed