



Body boarding at Whitesands beach, Courtesy of TYF Adventure

RECREATIONAL AUDIT FOR DISABLED ACCESS IN PEMBROKESHIRE: POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS TO BARRIERS REPORT

Research into potential solutions to barriers to participation in adventurous outdoor recreation for disabled individuals in Pembrokeshire



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Funded by:

Parc Cenedlaethol Arfordir Penfro
Pembrokeshire Coast National Park



Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru
Natural Resources Wales



Report prepared for	
Natural Resources Wales	
Through the NRW Competitive Grant 2014-15	
Natural Resources Wales (Bangor)	
Maes y Ffynnon	
Penrhosgarnedd	
Bangor	
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Contract reference	PCF RADA2017

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Version control:		
?? July 2017	Draft Report	PR
	Client review	



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1 Executive Summary

The aim of the RADA project is to ensure that people are able to visit a good quality environment, by identifying and working toward removing barriers for those with disabilities from visiting outdoor recreational sites and experiencing recreational activity. The 3 year project aims to increase / improve recreational opportunities for disabled people (so they can thus enjoy the social and health benefits associated with outdoor recreation) by identifying where barriers exist, exploring potential solutions to those barriers and providing an economic evaluation of those potential options.

This report has been produced at the end of the second year of the project, building on the 'Recreational Audit for Disabled Access in Pembrokeshire Survey' in 2015, which researched the provision of adventurous Outdoor Recreation opportunities for disabled individuals in Pembrokeshire, and produced a report¹ outlining findings in 2016.

Through a mixture of desk based research and stakeholder engagement with both providers of outdoor activities and participants, the barriers that were identified through the survey in 2015 were explored. The aims of this research and stakeholder engagement was to identify potential solutions to those barriers.

Barriers to participation can be categorized by either barriers to individuals to participate or barriers to organisation providing opportunities. They fall under the three identified types²,

Psychological - The attitudes, opinions and perceptions preventing participation.

Physical - A lack of suitable facilities and equipment preventing participation.

Logistical - Where provision has/can been made, inefficient implementation limits participation.

Potential Solutions Identified include:

- **Creation of inclusive marketing materials**
- **Creation of central resource on activities for varying abilities, linking to providers**
- **Introduce participants through organised bespoke 'taster activity sessions'**
- **Easier access to existing resources and promotion of facilities**
- **Creation of a shared 'Suggestion Box' of potential physical improvements**
- **Obtain specifically designed or modified equipment**
- **Training for staff to 'improve understanding and needs'**
- **Shared resource of specialized equipment**
- **Efficient use of volunteers to reduce cost in provision**

¹ To view the results of the RADA survey report go to <http://www.pembrokeshireoutdoors.org.uk/recreational-audit-for-disabled-access-in-pembrokeshire-survey-report-released/>

² Rankin, Mary-Anne, 2012, English Federation of Disability Sport: EXPLORING WHY DISABLED PEOPLE AND DEAF PEOPLE DO AND DON'T PARTICIPATE IN SPORT

2 Background

2.1 Introduction

In Pembrokeshire, the population density and levels of urban development are such to allow for large areas of open space and significant access to the countryside. Most of the population live, or visitors stay, within a short distance from a range of outdoor amenities, either on land or water, and these provide opportunities for outdoor recreation. Many studies have reported improved health outcomes, both physical and mental, as a result of taking part in physical activity, including outdoor recreation.

“Worldwide research has shown that recreational enjoyment is essential to human health, key to human development, essential to quality of life, reduces anti-social behaviour, builds families and communities, reduces the cost of health care, social services and policing, is a significant economic generator and is essential to ecological survival” (PCNPA Recreation Management Plan 2012-2017) ³

Information suggests that individuals particularly with a disability are less likely to participate in outdoor recreation.⁴

“We will provide and enable recreation and access opportunities which contribute to improving people’s health and wellbeing...” (Natural Resources Wales Corporate Plan 2014-17)

Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum (PCF) was commissioned to undertake the Recreational Audit for Disabled Access (RADA) with the following aim; to ensure that people are able to visit a good quality environment by identifying and working toward removing barriers for those with disabilities from visiting outdoor recreational sites and experiencing recreational activity.

The project aims to increase / improve recreational opportunities for disabled people (so they can thus enjoy the social and health benefits) by identifying where barriers exist, exploring potential solutions to those barriers and providing an economic evaluation of those potential options. The project covers 3 years and is split into 3 distinctive parts.

Year 1 - Identify barriers for disabled access to recreation via the Pembrokeshire Outdoor Charter Group (POCG) and Sport Disability Wales (SDW).

Year 2 – Assess and evaluate potential solutions for improving access through POCG members.

Year 3 – Provide an economic evaluation through costing and reporting on the possible solutions for providing better access to recreation by disabled users.

³ Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, 2012, Enjoying the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park ‘A plan to provide and manage opportunities for sustainable recreation in the National Park.’

⁴ Rankin, Mary-Anne, 2012, English Federation of Disability Sport: EXPLORING WHY DISABLED PEOPLE AND DEAF PEOPLE DO AND DON’T PARTICIPATE IN SPORT

2.2 Outdoor Adventure Recreation

As defined by 'Learning outside the Classroom' (a leading charity/organisation that provides support to outdoor professionals), adventurous activities include⁵:

- **Climbing:** for example rock climbing, abseiling, ice climbing, gorge walking, hill scrambling, sea level traversing, high and low level ropes courses
- **Watersports:** for example canoeing, kayaking, dragon boating, wave skiing, white-water rafting, improvised rafting, sailing, sailboarding, windsurfing
- **Trekking:** for example hill-walking, mountaineering, fell-running, orienteering, pony trekking, off-road cycling, off-piste skiing
- **Caving:** for example caving, pot-holing, mine exploration
- **Challenges and Skills:** for example archery, quad bikes, assault courses, mountain boarding, initiative exercises.

These activities provide learning opportunities such as:

- **Risk awareness:** the knowledge that risks can be identified and managed increases confidence about new or uncertain situations
- **Personal and social development:** gearing activities for success allows for the development of self-confidence and self-esteem
- **Citizenship:** learning how to support, lead and follow being a team player, developing social skills and a sense of community and responsibility
- **New ideas for physical exercise:** alternatives to ball sports and team games
- **Connection with the natural environment:** a developed awareness of green issues
- **Recreation:** fun and enjoyment, stress relief, purposeful leisure

2.3 Definition of an individual with a disability

Under the Equality Act of 2010, if an individual has a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities. 'Substantial' and 'long-term' means:

- 'Substantial' is more than minor or trivial e.g. it takes much longer than it usually would to complete a daily task like getting dressed
- 'Long-term' means 12 months or more e.g. a breathing condition that develops as a result of a lung infection

⁵ <http://www.lotc.org.uk/what-is-lotc/where-lotc/adventurous-activities/>

2.4 Barriers to participation

There have been many different ways of describing and identifying ‘barriers’ in previous research conducted by others for the purpose of this study.⁶ It was decided by the partners in this project to categorise barriers into three categories to be able to group similar challenges. The three categories are:

Psychological - Attitudes, opinions and perceptions preventing participation

Physical - Lack of suitable facilities and equipment prevent them from participating

Logistical - Where provision has/can been made, inefficient implementation limits participation

2.5 Objectives of the research

The Recreational Audit for Disabled Access (RADA) project aims to:-

- Research total barriers from conception (booking) through delivery and on completion of recreational activity
- Engage with the Pembrokeshire Outdoor Charter Group, a partnership approach for the management of sustainable recreation which includes local businesses, statutory and non-statutory organisations to raise awareness of issues/opportunities
- Increase / improve recreational opportunities for disabled people, by identifying where barriers exist, allowing the exploration of potential solutions to those barriers and providing an economic evaluation of those potential options in future work

2.6 Methodology

Desk based research was conducted to assess the literature available with regard to outdoor recreation and sport and the barriers to participation. A facilitated engagement event brought together stakeholders including representation from public, private and third sector to discuss the findings of the survey conducted in 2015⁷ and formulate potential ways to overcome the barriers identified. Phone and face to face interviews were also used to engage with individuals that could not attend the event providing an opportunity for wider input and post event progress.

⁶ Rankin, Mary-Anne, 2012, English Federation of Disability Sport: EXPLORING WHY DISABLED PEOPLE AND DEAF PEOPLE DO AND DON'T PARTICIPATE IN SPORT

⁷ To view the results of the RADA survey report go to <http://www.pembrokeshireoutdoors.org.uk/recreational-audit-for-disabled-access-in-pembrokeshire-survey-report-released/>

3 Potential Solutions to Barriers

Barriers identified through the RADA survey completed in 2015-16⁸ can be separated into two categories - either barriers for disabled individuals to participate or barriers for providers of outdoor adventure activities when working with disabled individuals.



The main barriers identified for disabled individuals to participate were as follows:

- **Difficulties with public transport**

A lack of regular, public transport services, particularly to rural areas, during hours of desired participation, i.e. weekends, evenings, out of the holiday season, etc.

- **Perception problems**

It was shown that some providers, group leaders, parents/carers had negative attitudes towards the ability of disabled individuals to participate in certain activities. To a lesser extent, disabled individuals perceive a lack of self-ability to partake in some of the activities seen as more active or risky.

- **Lack of awareness of opportunities**

A general lack of information known about the activities, locations, and providers that are currently available and accessible offering opportunities. This lack of awareness was found in both participants and providers.

- **Dependence on support from others**

Some individuals need support from others to go along with and during participation of activities and this reduces the frequency of participation.

⁸ To view the results of the RADA survey report go to <http://www.pembrokeshireoutdoors.org.uk/recreational-audit-for-disabled-access-in-pembrokeshire-survey-report-released/>

The main barriers for providers of outdoor adventure activities were seen as:

- **Financial resources**

Suppliers felt that providing high quality safe activities for target individuals in a cost effective manner can be a challenge due to the need for specialist training, equipment, and higher staffing ratios.

- **Lack of appropriate activity sites**

Some of the providers reported that the natural environment can provide great challenges due to the varying landscapes, either encountered while conducting the activity or attempting to access a site. Appropriate sites that are available are not always geographically suitable.

- **Specifically designed/modified equipment**

Due to the cost, availability, and the frequency of use, providers often cited a lack of suitable equipment to make the activity inclusive for all individuals.

- **No demand**

Many providers identified a lack of demand; it is difficult to determine whether this is because of the current barriers that have not been overcome.

All of the above barriers fall under the three identified types - Psychological, Physical or Logistical. The potential solutions identified will be presented under either Psychological, Physical or Logistical as some potential solutions help address both barriers to individuals and barriers to organisations.

3.1 Potential Solutions to Psychological Barriers (Attitudes, opinions and perceptions preventing participation.)

3.1.1 Creation of inclusive marketing materials

To overcome the negative attitudes towards the ability of disabled individuals to participate in certain activities by both disabled individuals and others that are critical to participation, there is a need to show what activities are available and accessible. Marketing or the action of promoting products or services is an important part of letting any potential customer know that they can 'do' the activity. There is a lack of inclusion of disabled individuals in the imagery / wording used in the promotion of adventurous outdoor recreation. The old saying "a picture is worth a thousand words" rings very true here.

To be able to communicate effectively, inspire potential participants, and provide assurance to those critical to enabling participation, activity providers need to improve the diversity of their marketing. In order for them to be able to achieve this, they need to be able to access good quality imagery of disabled individuals taking part in activities. This could be hosted possibly on Wales on View, the non-commercial photographic resource, provided by Visit Wales - the tourism division of Welsh Government. Visit Wales made available an extensive collection of high quality photographic imagery, to assist tourism partners and agencies in promoting the best Wales has to offer.

In addition, there is the need to provide the correct wording when expressing an activity is available for all abilities. Providing suggested wording would alleviate concerns of possibly using incorrect terms and inadvertently causing offense.

3.1.2 Creation of central resource on activities for varying abilities, linking to providers

Through the process of engaging with stakeholders it was realised that a lot of work has already been carried out by organisations such as the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, Pembrokeshire County Council and the National Trust in publicising what is available for people of varying abilities. The issue is that not many of the recreation providers, or the potential participants know about or access the resources available that promote activities. It has been suggested that a central place to access information could help facilitate this need of disseminating existing or newly created recreational resources/products. If such a resource was created it would need the support of all stakeholders to raise awareness of its existence and promote the use of it.

3.1.3 Introduce participants through organised bespoke 'taster activity sessions'

Bespoke short introductions to an activity or 'taster session' events aimed specifically for disabled users would be beneficial in changing the perception of what is available. These sessions could be built-on in partnership with other suggestions in this report to reach maximum benefit and impact. The proposed taster sessions would be a good opportunity to obtain imagery and other content to increase the availability of inclusive marketing materials see [section 3.1.1](#). The events could also be an opportunity to allow providers to implement any training received, see [section 3.3.1](#). The activity taster sessions should also signpost to opportunities for regular participation to ensure they are not seen as one-off or 'token' gestures.

3.2 Potential Solutions to Physical Barriers

(A lack of suitable facilities and equipment preventing participation.)

3.2.1 Easier access to existing resources and promotion of facilities

There are facilities that are more suitable for all abilities than others, the PCNPA has identified many of these and has created resources such as ‘[Walks for All](#)’ and ‘[Easy Access beaches](#)’ to promote accessible areas of the National Park. These resources help users decide if the path/beach is suitable by providing relevant information such as distances, surface type, gradients, location of benches, and gates. This approach is beneficial as it allows users/leaders to be informed of conditions and it also helps suggest new potential areas to explore. This should be promoted and encouraged by other land managers.

The PCNPA also have a program providing beach wheelchairs for hire at specific ‘Easy Access Beaches’. These beach wheel chairs are specifically designed to be used on sandy beaches and provide access to some of the finest beaches in Wales. The beach wheelchairs can ease access to the sea and provide the opportunity to access water based recreation activities such as sea swimming, body boarding, surfing, and coastering. Not all activity providers are aware of the process of hiring these specialised equipment and they have not proved the easiest to use in conjunction with activities. There should be engagement between the manager of the beach wheelchairs and the outdoor activity sector to see if a strategy could be put in place to ensure this valuable resource is used more often and more efficiently.



3.2.2 Creation of a shared ‘Suggestion Box’ of potential physical improvements

When considering improving access with physical improvements in the natural environment (especially potentially wild designated landscapes such as the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park), it is vital to ensure the improvements do not overly impact the sense of place that the designation is protecting. The local authorities and businesses in Pembrokeshire have done considerable amounts of improvements already and should be given recognition for this achievement.

It is also important to consider that some improvements, if done in a manner that is sympathetic to the landscape, can be quite costly. Taking both of these points into account, it was put forward that a single place to provide suggestions for physical access improvements would be beneficial so they can be prioritised and easily referenced when needed. This function could possibly be hosted by the local access forum, where all local authorities would be able to view, discuss, and prioritise. This ‘Suggestion Box of Access Improvements’ would need to be promoted so that local land owners and businesses could feed into the process.

3.2.3 Obtain specifically designed or modified equipment

To provide high quality safe adventure outdoor recreation experiences, specifically designed or modified equipment can be needed. This designed or modified equipment can be very specific to one type of disability or even one individual, and without it provision cannot be provided safely or at a level enjoyable for the participant. Obtaining and storing specialised equipment can prove to be expensive, even though it is vital. It is recommended that this should be done with input of activity providers and participants. This recommendation of working with the activity providers and participants to procure enabling equipment links with [section 3.3.2 ‘Shared resource of specialized equipment’](#) to ensure any investment into specialised equipment is used and maintained efficiently.

3.3 Potential Solutions to Logistical Barriers

(Where provision has/can be made, inefficient implementation limits participation.)

3.3.1 Training for staff to ‘improve understanding and needs’

Previous survey results showed that 34% of activity providers identified a ‘lack of appropriately trained staff’ as a barrier to encouraging individuals with a disability to use their facilities. In addition, 60% of providers acknowledged that ‘appropriate training for all staff’ would encourage increased participation. This difference suggests that current levels of training allow for some participation but further investment in training would allow for more and better experiences for participants. [Disability Sport Wales](#) provides training for club sports through their ‘insport’ project, which aims to support the physical activity, sport, and leisure sectors deliver activities inclusive of disabled people. The insport project is active and achieving in Pembrokeshire though currently does not engage with the adventure activity sector or more adventurous sector clubs. This is shown by having 17 clubs as part of insport in Pembrokeshire though none that provide climbing, surfing, canoeing, rowing, sailing, or outdoor pursuits. The workforce development, program, and organisation support provided through the four levels of insport would provide the adventure activity sector in Pembrokeshire the skills, training, and confidence to encourage more participation. There should be active encouragement of the uptake and delivery of the insport program or similar within the adventure activity sector in Pembrokeshire.

3.3.2 Shared resource of specialized equipment

To make use of the specialised equipment discussed in [section 3.2.3](#) efficiently, the ability to share between activity providers would maximise benefit, and reduce cost of maintenance and storage. The

process of accessing the equipment could be managed by the Pembrokeshire Outdoor Charter Group which could work with members to store the equipment in appropriate locations. It could possibly be run similar to a tool hire business allowing the use of the equipment for an appropriate fee so the venture is self-sustaining.

3.3.3 Efficient use of volunteers to reduce cost in provision

A majority of commercial activity providers (65%) participated in the 2015 RADA survey and stated that the cost of providing for disabled users due to need of high staffing ratios prevents the business from actively pursuing disabled customers⁹. The businesses reported that they generally break even or even operate at a loss when providing for less able customers.

When asked why they continue to provide the service when losing money, many providers felt that the benefit to the participant and staff outweigh the cost of provision. Since the cost of staff is an obstacle, it was suggested to look to the voluntary sector for support. If there was a pool of appropriately trained volunteers to help support provision, this would ease the financial burden of provision while allowing the benefits to participant, staff, and volunteer to continue. Volunteering could be encouraged by linking with sections of the public required to obtain work experience, and/or linking to timebanking¹⁰ schemes. Pembrokeshire currently has a strong network of volunteering supported by [Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services \(PAVS\)](#) - engagement with PAVS to pursue support for provision should be considered.



Coasteering at Abereddy, Courtesy of Celtic Quest Coasteering

⁹ 2015 RADA Survey 'Recreational Audit for Disabled Access in Pembrokeshire Survey Report'

<http://www.pembrokeshireoutdoors.org.uk/recreational-audit-for-disabled-access-in-pembrokeshire-survey-report-released/>

¹⁰ Timebanking is a kind of money. Give one hour of service to another, and receive one time credit. ...

Timebanking happens when a network or circle of members have agreed that they will give and receive credits for services that other members provide. Those networks are called "timebanks."

4 Conclusions

The barriers to increasing the provision of outdoor recreational activities and the participation in these opportunities are not small and can be complex in Pembrokeshire, though there have been potential solutions identified. Potential solutions range from increasing promotion of existing opportunities and resources, to obtaining equipment vital to high quality provision, and possibly a better relationship with the voluntary sector for support.

This report makes the following recommendations:

To improve the attitudes, opinions and perceptions preventing participation and reduce psychological barriers:

- Creation of inclusive marketing materials and provide access to good quality imagery of disabled individuals taking part in activities.
- Creation of central resource on activities for varying abilities, linking to providers easing the complexity of find an appropriate activity and provider
- Introduce participants through organised bespoke ‘taster activity sessions’ and signpost to opportunities for regular participation

To overcome physical barriers where a lack of suitable facilities and equipment is preventing participation:

- There should be engagement between the manager of the beach wheelchairs and the outdoor activity sector to see if a strategy could be put in place to ensure this valuable resource is used more often and more efficiently.
- Create a single place to provide suggestions for physical access improvements would be beneficial so they can be prioritised and easily referenced when needed.
- Obtain specifically designed or modified equipment to provide high quality safe adventure outdoor recreation experiences.

Where provision has/can been made, increase efficiency and implementation to limits logistical barriers.

- Provide training for staff to ‘improve understanding and needs’ such as Sport Disability Wales ‘insport’ program.
- To make use of any specialised equipment efficiently, the ability to share between activity providers would maximise benefit, and reduce cost of maintenance and storage.
- Approach the voluntary sector for support to reduce cost in provision.

These potential solutions aim to; change the attitudes opinions and perceptions preventing participation, increase the suitability of facilities and equipment preventing participation, and to make provision more efficient where it currently exists.

The next phase of the Recreational Audit for Disabled Access (RADA) will be to provide an economic evaluation through costing and reporting on the possible solutions for providing better access to recreation by disable users.



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