



# From the Brecon Beacons to Bradgate

The role of parks in re-connecting people and  
nature

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In case you are wondering...



...why I left!!

## Bradgate's Richard III Connection

Elizabeth Woodville, widow of Sir John Grey of Bradgate (killed at the Battle of St Albans in 1461) secretly married Edward IV and was the mother of Edward V, one of the "Princes in the Tower" allegedly murdered by Richard III



# My CV

- 1991-1997: Land Agent/Estates Surveyor  
Ministry of Defence
- 1997-1998: Private Practice
- 1998-2004: Estates Bursar, Oundle School
- 2004-2007: Director of Countryside & Land  
Management – Brecon Beacons NPA
- 2007-2012: Bursar, Bedford High School
- 2012- : Land Agent & Surveyor  
Bradgate Park Trust

# Tonight's Talk

- A Brief History of Country Parks
- Bradgate Park & Bradgate Park Trust
- The Bigger Picture/Charnwood Forest
- Reconnecting People and Nature
- Education
- The Next Generation

# A Brief History of Country Parks

- Areas of countryside around urban areas were acquired by local authorities for public benefit throughout most of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and earlier
- For example: Open Spaces Act 1906, Physical Recreation Act 1937 and numerous private Acts of Parliament secured Wimbledon Common, Hampstead Heath and Epping Forest for the public
- Countryside Act 1949 enabled the creation of Forest Parks

# Bradgate Park

- Bradgate Park is c900 acres of medieval deer park first enclosed in 12<sup>th</sup> Century
- Herds of Red and Fallow deer approx 400 total
- Ruins of Bradgate House, home of the Grey family, sometime Earls of Stamford. Most famous resident was Lady Jane Grey
- Park is a remnant of an essentially medieval landscape and has a wild and untamed aspect that you don't expect to find so close to the city

# Bradgate Park Trust

- The Park was bought in 1928 by Charles Bennion, local businessman and philanthropist, and given in Trust for the benefit of the people of Leicestershire and visitors to the county
- Swithland Wood, originally part of the estate but alienated, purchased by Rotary Club of Leicester in 1925 and given to the Trust to manage in 1932

# National Parks

- Yellowstone National Park established 1872
- US National Park Service set up in 1916
- In 1968 the IUCN defined a National Park as:  
*“One or several ecosystems not materially altered by human exploitation and occupation, where plant and animal species, geomorphological sites and habitats are of special scientific, educative, and recreative interest...”*
- We don't have any of these left in the UK!

# National Parks in the UK

- Are IUCN Category 5 Protected Landscapes where:  
*“The main objective is to safeguard regions that have built up a 'distinct character' in regards to their ecological, biological, cultural or scenic value. Protected Landscapes allow a higher level of sustainable interaction with surrounding communities (such as traditional agricultural and forestry systems) and should represent an integral balance between people and nature.”*

# National Parks in the UK

- Mass Trespass on Kinder Scout in 1932 to call for greater access to the countryside – 5 people imprisoned
- National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949. Described by the Minister responsible as “the most exciting Act of the post-war Parliament” and this included the Welfare State and the National Health Service
- Most English and Welsh National Parks were designated in the 1950s
- Scotland caught up in 2000.

# National Parks in the UK

- Represent the highest level of landscape protection in the UK
- Administered by National Park Authorities constituted under the Environment Act 1995
- 2 purposes:
  1. To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park
  2. To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the area by the public
- Where there is a conflict, priority is given to the first purpose

# A Brief History of Country Parks (cont'd)

- The 1960s brought visions of a countryside invaded by hordes of car-borne day-trippers enjoying increased leisure time and incomes
- 1966 White Paper *Leisure in the Countryside* proposed the establishment of Country Parks with 3 objectives:
  1. to make it easier for those seeking recreation to enjoy their leisure in the open without travelling too far and adding to congestion on the roads;
  2. to ease the pressure on more remote and solitary places;
  3. to reduce the risk of damage to the countryside, aesthetic as well as physical...

# Bradgate as a Country Park

- Countryside Act 1968 empowered local authorities to create country parks
- Bradgate Park was designated on 27<sup>th</sup> May 1970

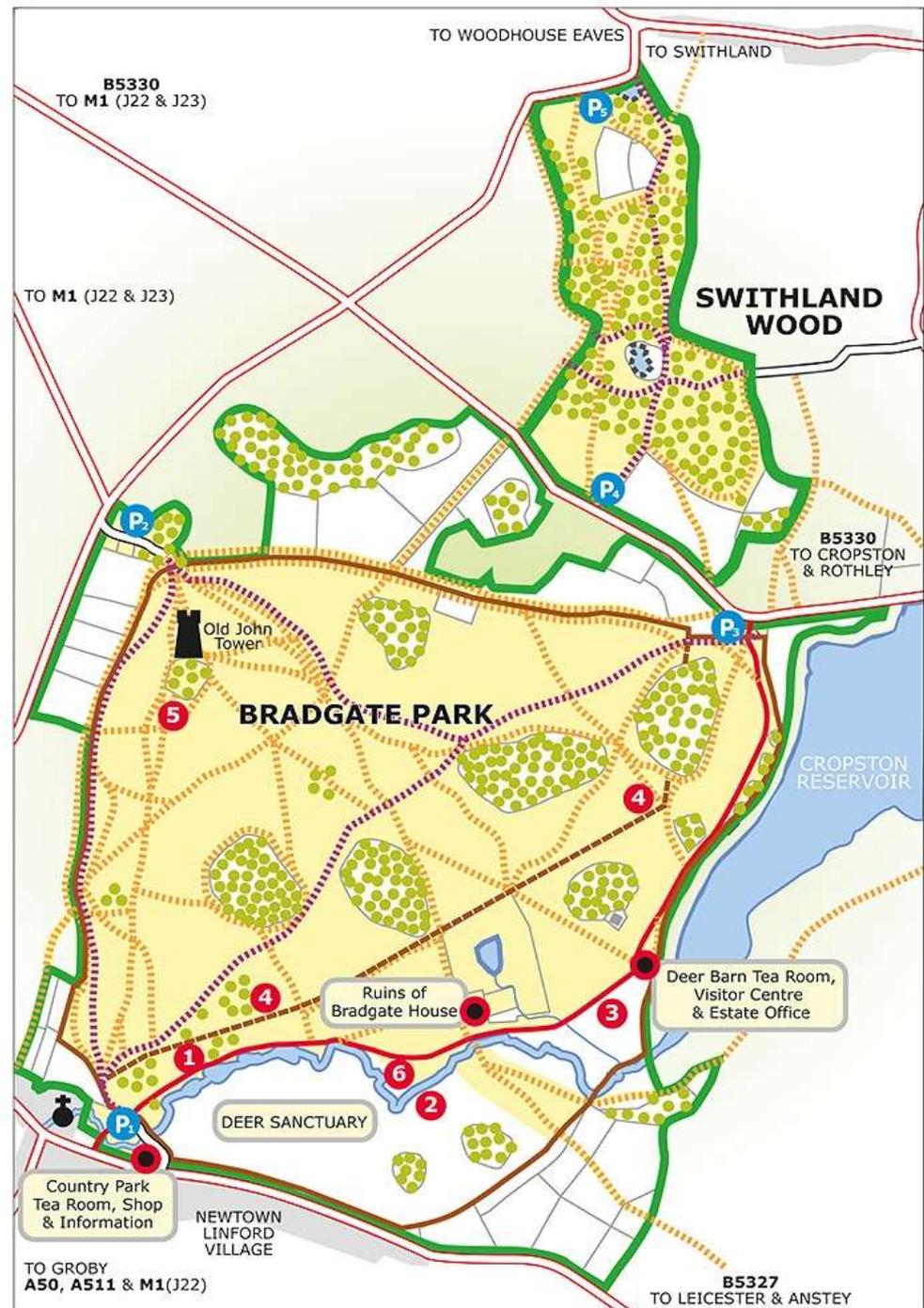
# Bradgate Park Trust (2)

The objects of the charity:

1. The provision of a public park and recreation ground, and the maintenance and improvement thereof, for the benefit of the inhabitants of the County of Leicestershire, and of visitors thereto, with the object of improving the conditions of life for such persons, and
2. To advance the education of the public in the care and appreciation of the environment

# Access

- 13 km of public footpaths
- 3km of bridleways
- 5km concessionary horse riding tracks
- 370 hectares of public access



# Access Issues

Managing potential conflicts:

- Horses and Walkers
- Cyclists and Walkers
- Dogs and Deer

Getting people off the tarmac!

# The Bigger Picture

Bradgate Park is:

- An Attraction – 88% of visitors to Charnwood Forest come here
- A Hub – within Charnwood Forest
- A Gateway – to Charnwood Forest

We need to think about how we fulfil all these roles and cater for these various categories of visitors

# Charnwood Forest

- Proposed Regional Park
- Charnwood Forest Landscape Partnership

The underpinning theme of what makes Charnwood special is GEOLOGY

How do we “sex up” Geology for the general public?

# FFOREST FAWR G E O P A R K

470 Million Years of Earth History



PARC DAEAREGOL  
FFOREST FAWR



GREAT FOREST  
G E O P A R K

'From Geo-exploitation to Geo-conservation'



# Reconnecting People and Nature

*“...with the object of improving the conditions of life for such persons”*

- How can parks improve people's quality of life?

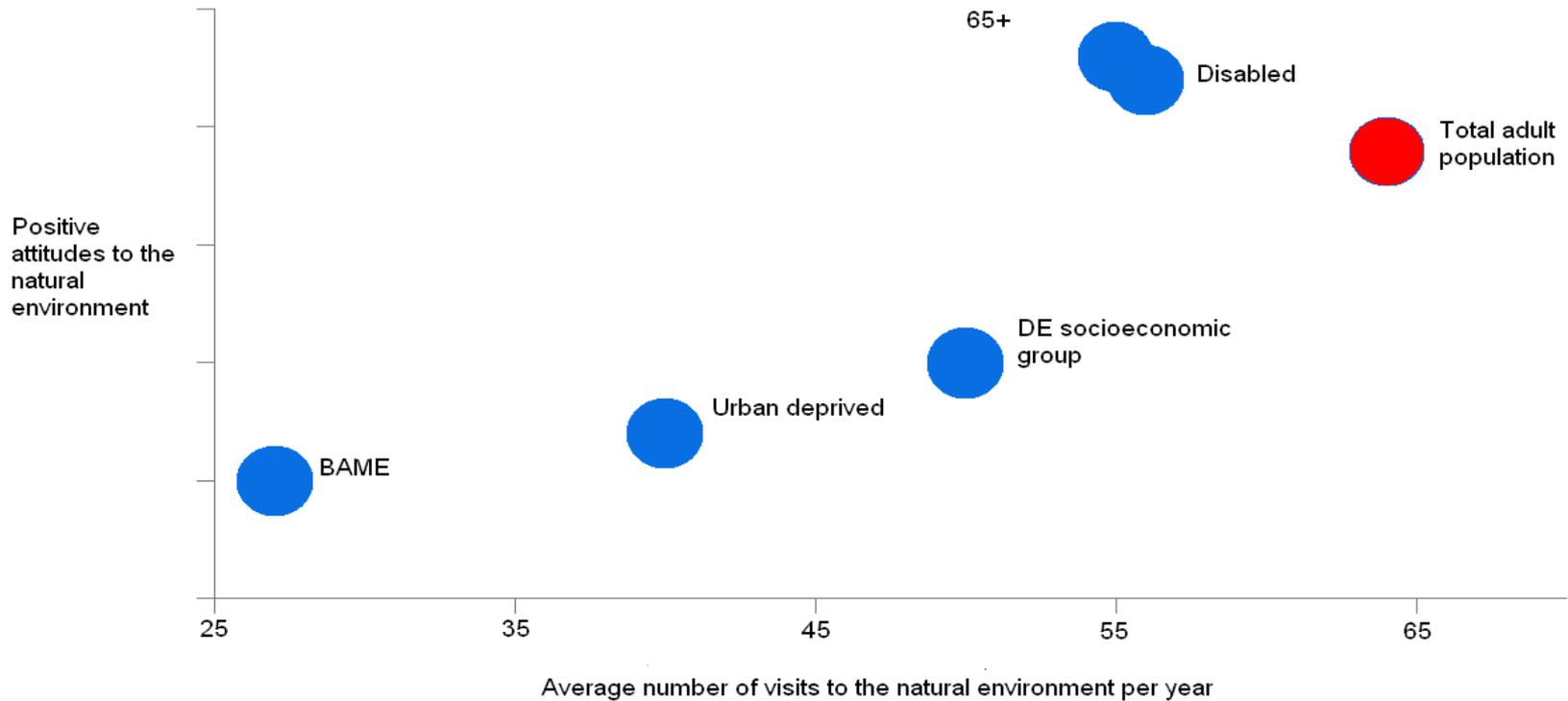
# The Benefits of Access to Nature

Research demonstrates the following benefits of access to nature and green space, particularly around urban areas:

- Improvements in physical health
- Improvements in mental health
- Reductions in health inequalities between rich and poor

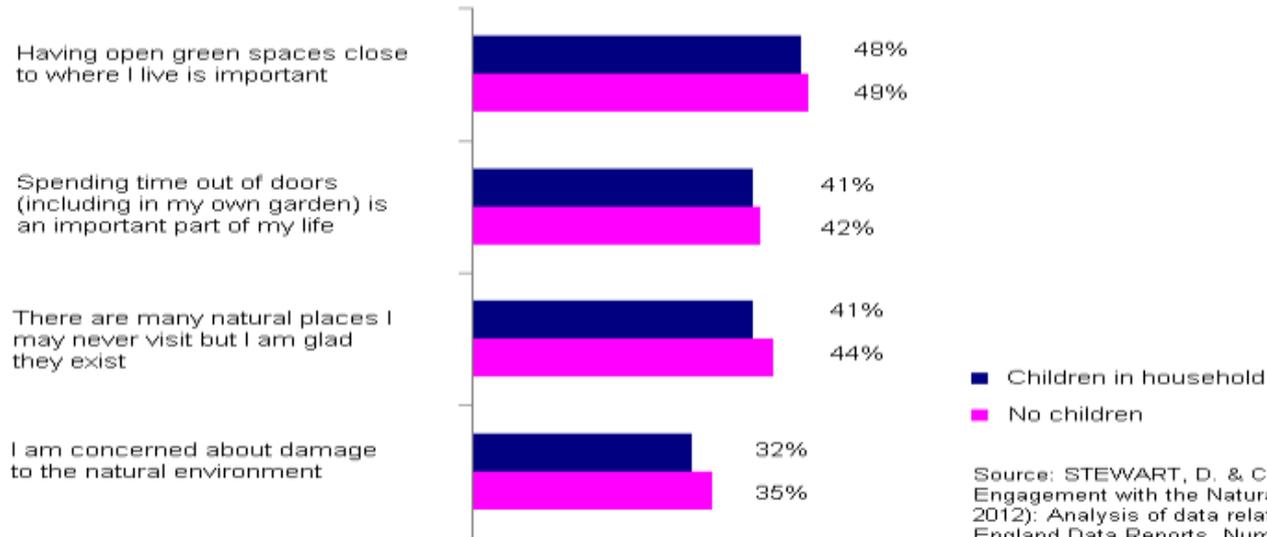
The health benefits of living with a view of a green space are worth up to £300 per person per year.

# Who Visits Nature?



Source: BURT, J., STEWART, D., PRESTON, S. & COSTLEY, T. 2013. Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment Survey (2009 -2012): Difference in access to the natural environment between social groups within the adult English population. Natural England Data Reports, Number 003.

# Attitudes to Nature



Source: STEWART, D. & COSTLEY, T. 2013. Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment Survey (2009 - 2012): Analysis of data related to visits with children. Natural England Data Reports, Number 004

# Education

*“To advance the education of the public in the care and appreciation of the environment”*

- Formal education
- Informal education
- Interpretation

*“It is a miracle that curiosity survives formal education”*

*Albert Einstein*

# Informal Education

*“Education is not the filling of a pail but the lighting of a fire”*

*W B Yeats*

In an education system that is all about the national curriculum, exams and league tables, how do we teach children an understanding and appreciation of the natural world beyond cramming into them the quickly forgotten facts needed to clear the next hurdle?

# Interpretation

*“The chief aim of Interpretation is not instruction, but provocation.”*

Freeman Tilden “Interpreting our Heritage”

We should be more concerned that people care about the Park than know about the Park.

# The Next Generation

*“I can't believe that future generations will learn their trade on television, on the internet and in libraries because the passion has to come from the heart. You've got to be able to set your alarm clock to go out and sit in a hide.”*

Chris Packham in the “Radio Times”

*“Let them out. Turn them loose! How dare you imprison little children in your upholstered horseless hearse!”*

Edward Abbey “Desert Solitaire”

# Who Pays for all this?

- Local Authority funding is declining
- The Trust needs to become self-supporting
- 40% of income is from car parks (compulsory)
- 40% is from catering & retail (voluntary)
- Visiting and learning about the Park should be free
- Sustainability is an economic concept as well as an environmental one



**Thank  
you**

