



## MOSAIC – BUILDING CONNECTIONS

The aim of the Campaign for National Parks' Mosaic project is to cement long term sustainable engagement between black and minority ethnic (BME) communities and the National Parks and Youth Hostels Association (YHA).

Mosaic achieved this through building and nurturing connections between the National Parks and the YHA and Community Champions; people from or linked to BME communities who have a passion for National Parks, want to get more involved with them and promote them in their communities.

This paper shows the importance of connections and gives examples of how the Mosaic project has worked to build effective connections between people and landscapes and between Community Champions and staff, volunteers and members of National Park Authorities.

### How Mosaic works

Mosaic introduces people to other people and people to places who may not have otherwise been connected. Once the connection is made, and in some cases supported, the role of the Mosaic project becomes redundant. Building that connection takes 30 seconds in some cases – in others it takes years.

In the first instance, Mosaic project officers are the main link between Champions and the National Park they live closest to. Project officers recruit new Community Champions, work with them on a personal development plan and create opportunities for them to get to know the National Park and National Park Authority staff and members.

### Connections with landscape

1. *For most people, a single visit to a National Park and its awe-inspiring landscape is enough to connect with nature and inspire others about it.*

Around half of all Community Champions had never or rarely visited a National Park before their first experience with the Mosaic project<sup>1</sup>. Most Community Champions attend a Group Leader Visit when they first get involved with Mosaic. Group Leader Visits are organised by the Campaign for National Parks and a National Park Authority. A small group of Community Champions spend two days learning about a particular part of their local National Park. They experience different activities – conservation volunteering, cycling or walking for example. For many that weekend is enough to get started on promoting the park to others and organising visits to it.

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<sup>1</sup> Mosaic final evaluation report, Liz Mackie, 2012



*“The National Parks are amazing places; good places to communicate and spend time with your friends and family. It reconnects you with the green space; it is important to tell everyone to not take for granted the green space that is around us,”* commented Sarah Liu, a Community Champion with the North York Moors National Park after her first Group Leader Visit with Mosaic.

- 2. National Parks can reconnect people to places in surprising and important ways. For people who have come to live in England, it can be an important way of feeling more at home.*

Lucy moved to the UK from Zimbabwe 7 years ago. Most of her close relatives are still back home. While walking in the South Downs during a Group Leader Visit the group came to a slightly wooded area, sheltered in a dip on the exposed downland. *“I suddenly feel at home,”* said Lucy. *“This place is just like where I grew up in Zimbabwe.”* Later she commented, *“This is where I come to feel at home now.”*

Nurjahan, took a group of older Bangladeshi women on a walk in the Yorkshire Dales. They stopped by a stream. Immediately the women removed their shoes and socks and splashed into the water, exclaiming that they hadn't been in a stream like this since being girls in Bangladesh.

- 3. Taking part in something in the National Park builds a connection with the landscape that is deeper than enjoyment.*

*“I understand what these plants are now, why they are here, what effect they are having. Helping to maintain this land means that when I visit it next I can feel that I helped keep it like it is, I can tell others about this land,”* said one of a group Community Champions while cutting gorse on the South Downs and burning it.

### **The role of the Mosaic project officer**

- 4. A personal relationship between Mosaic project officer and Community Champion ensures that the Champion's experience of the Mosaic project fits with their particular ambitions or needs. Project officers are flexible with how they use the Mosaic framework according to each situation.*

Mosaic project officers make sure to meet with Champions face-to-face as much as possible (despite covering huge geographical areas). This is particularly important for a first meeting or induction. Every Community Champion gets involved with the National Parks in a different way. There is a huge range of experience and interest amongst the Community Champions. It is only through this one-to-one contact that the project officers can introduce Champions to the right people, arrange for suitable training and support them to organise their own events.

5. *Mosaic project officers are facilitators. They are constantly networking, introducing people and then removing themselves from the picture.*

Vanessa, a Community Champion, was struggling to get started organising an ‘English Walk Caribbean Food’ event. At a National Park organised event, her project officer, introduced her to a local South Downs ranger. He then introduced her to several other people. Vanessa worked with these new contacts to organise the first ‘English Walks Caribbean Foods’ event, where local South Downs residents and new visitors to the South Downs, most from a Caribbean background enjoyed a walk followed by a Jamaican lunch together. There was a new cultural experience for everyone at the event. Vanessa is planning a second event – and will work directly with these contacts to organise it.

Towards the end of the Mosaic project, the Lake District National Park Authority held a handover event with Community Champions. The project officer did not attend. After the event, Champions reported how it was useful that he didn’t attend, because it forced them and the National Park Authority to work together without automatically turning to him. It helped them develop a functioning relationship.

6. *Champions who are new to National Parks and organising events or other promotional activities are doing something new. But they will achieve great things with support from a project officer who they trust and who lets them get on with it.*

One Champion comments, *“I never thought I could do these things. We learnt these new places from the Mosaic project. When we had an idea the project officer didn’t change it, she just helped us with thinking about how to do it. She believed we could do it, so we believed we could do it. And we did it! And next time, we know we can do it.”*

## **Changing attitudes and organisations**

7. *Personal relationships can make big changes*

The Campaign for National Parks’ Mosaic project aimed to affect organisational change in its partner organisations, the National Park Authorities and the YHA. One of the indicators of this was that champions would become part of official decision making fora. While this is important, we’ve found that it is the personal relationships that develop between Champions and National Park Authority.

Staff that have the power to make changes. An external evaluation of the Mosaic project backs this up saying that: *“National Park CEOs feel that personal contact that NPA staff and Members have had with Community Champions has had a big impact, helping them [NPA*



*staff and Members] to better understand how to break down barriers for ethnic minority communities, and to feel more confident about working with and for ethnically diverse communities.”<sup>2</sup>*

#### **8. Informal settings and face to face introductions are best**

Group Leader Visits (as described above) create excellent settings for people to meet who would not have normally met. Champions meet staff, rangers, Members and volunteers from the National Park Authority and other organisations. The visits provide an informal setting which allow people to explore their wider interests and build stronger relationships. It is after Group Leader Visits, that many champions start to organise their own events, using the contacts they’ve made during the event.

They also offer chance encounters. Northumberland champions got into conversation with a cafe owner during a group leader visit. She told them about their upcoming Guy Fawkes Night Bonfire. The Champions brought their community group right up to the Northumberland National Park for the display.

#### **9. Connections don’t automatically happen between Community Champions.**

Community Champions are different and from hugely varying backgrounds. Working relationships form between people who have something in common, this might be cultural, a sporting interest, similar aged children. It might be between champions who go on to work together, or between a champion and a National Park ranger, for example.

Over the past three years, the Campaign for National Parks’ Mosaic project has focussed building connections to create foundation for positive change in our countryside and cities. Aisha Mirza, a Lake District Community Champion sums it up: *“It’s the friendships I’ve made with so many people, including staff working in the National Parks, volunteers, the Mosaic team and the champions themselves. It is these ties that make this project so unique.”*

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<sup>2</sup> Mosaic Final Evaluation Report, Gilfillan Partnership, April 2012