



Evaluation of the Mosaic Cymru project

FINAL REPORT SUMMARY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

This is a summary of the final evaluation report of the Wales Cymru project. The evaluation was commissioned by the Campaign for National Parks (CNP) and carried out by The Gilfillan Partnership.

The aim of the Wales Cymru project was to ‘cement long-term sustainable engagement between black and minority ethnic communities and National Parks in Wales.’ The project took place over a three year period, from January 2012 to January 2015, with funding support from the Big Lottery Fund’s People and Places programme. The project was led by CNP in partnership with the Youth Hostels Association (YHA) and the National Park Authorities (NPAs) for the three National Parks in Wales: Brecon Beacons, Pembrokeshire Coast and Snowdonia.

The Mosaic Cymru project evolved from a series of Mosaic projects initiated by CNP and delivered in partnership with YHA and NPAs in England and Wales. The Mosaic model is centred on the concept of Community Champions. Community Champions are individuals who are recruited from ethnic minority communities in urban areas near to the National Parks. They are trained and supported to become Champions of the National Parks within their communities, and to engage with and influence changes within the NPAs on equalities issues and access to National Parks.

Evaluation

The independent evaluation measured achievement of a series of target outcomes for the project which included: 60 Community Champions with confidence to champion the National Parks within ethnic minority communities; concrete examples of organisational change within the partner organisations to engage with ethnic minority communities; 1,260 people from ethnic minority communities enjoying the National Parks.

Findings and conclusions

Overall, the Mosaic Cymru project has worked well and has achieved some important outcomes, most successfully in its creation of a cohort of Community Champions who have the skills, knowledge and confidence to introduce ethnic minority communities to the National Parks. This cohort of Champions has increased the number of ethnic minority visitors to the National Parks. People who have worked in the National Parks for many years report an increase in ethnic minority visitor numbers and, in some cases, that they are now seeing ethnic minority visitors for the first time.

The project has been less successful in its outcomes to influence and achieve organisational change within the partner organisations. The NPA commitments to organisational change have become more ambitious and more clearly defined, but there only a few tangible signs of change.

A key area where visible change could have been achieved is in the diversity of images used in public communications about the National Parks. Mosaic has created a library of images of ethnic minority people enjoying the National Parks and the NPAs are confident that these will be used. But this has not yet happened for all the

National Parks. Images of ethnic minority people are not well represented on all the National Park websites and other communication materials and do not reflect the ethnic diversity of the Welsh population.

The achievements of the Mosaic Cymru project have been within a context of rapidly changing and increasingly difficult operating circumstances for the project partners and the communities they work with. As a result, Mosaic has probably achieved less at a strategic level than would otherwise have been the case. Public spending cuts have had a major impact on the capacity of all the project partners and a particularly devastating impact on the ethnic minority voluntary sector. It is uncertain that the ethnic minority voluntary sector will be able to sustain engagement with initiatives such as Mosaic in the future.

The project's intended outcomes were over-ambitious for the scale of resource available to deliver them. The project has been constrained by the limited staff resources which were allowed within the funding awarded. The project team has focused on recruiting and supporting the Champions, without which there would have been no project at all. This focus is reflected in the overall outcomes for the project, which are excellent for Champion recruitment and Champion activities, but less successful on the broader, strategic outcomes for influencing and achieving organisational change.

The project has produced many inspiring stories about personal growth and development for the individuals who have taken part, particularly the Community Champions. These stories vividly illustrate what is special about the National Parks and why it is important that everyone should have the opportunity to enjoy them. The Mosaic project team has done a very good job of capturing these stories, in writing and on film, to share with wider audiences.

Mosaic has made a useful contribution to the social inclusion agenda in Wales, primarily by providing the NPAs with practical examples of ways in which they can promote inclusion. The project has also enabled the project partners and Champions to explore important issues around the physical and mental health benefits from access to the National Parks, and shaped ideas of how these can be researched in more detail in future projects.

It is too early to say whether the overall project aim 'to cement long term sustainable engagement between black and minority ethnic communities and National Parks in Wales' has been achieved. Mosaic Cymru has laid the foundations for this. Ethnic minority communities in Wales now have Champions who will continue to promote, encourage and facilitate visits to the National Parks, and the NPAs have staff and members who are strongly committed to maintaining the relationships established with ethnic minority communities and overcoming barriers which prevent them from enjoying the National Parks. Whether the enthusiasm and commitments from Champions and NPAs can be sustained in the long term is uncertain and remains to be seen.

1. PLANNED PROJECT OUTCOMES

The aim of the Wales Cymru project was to ‘cement long-term sustainable engagement between black and minority ethnic communities and National Parks in Wales.’ The project took place over a three year period, from January 2012 to January 2015, with funding support from the Big Lottery Fund’s People and Places programme. The project was led by CNP in partnership with the Youth Hostels Association (YHA) and the National Park Authorities (NPAs) for the three National Parks in Wales: Brecon Beacons, Pembrokeshire Coast and Snowdonia.

The Mosaic Project Business Plan identifies six target outcomes for the project:

1. 60 Community Champions with the requisite skills, knowledge and confidence to champion National Parks with people from BME communities;
2. Five partner organisations (three NPAs, YHA, CNP) demonstrate concrete examples of changes from strategic to ground level policy, decision making and practice to engage and involve people from BME communities;
3. Established partnerships and relationships between the local BME voluntary sector and National Parks;
4. Community Champions influencing the National Park Authorities through both formal and informal decision-making fora;
5. 1,260 people from BME communities have enjoyed the natural environment through participating in activities in National Parks;
6. Improved relations and new relationships between urban BME communities and rural communities in the National Parks.

2. SUMMARY FINDINGS

2.1 Community Champions

The project has met its target for recruiting and training 60 Community Champions. The 68 Champions are enthusiastic and committed. A majority have been very active in organising visits to take groups of people to the National Parks. Between them they have introduced several thousand people from ethnic minority communities to the National Parks. A majority of the people introduced by the Champions are from disadvantaged and excluded groups who are extremely unlikely to have discovered the National Parks on their own.

Mosaic has provided good support to Community Champions through training, events and one to one contact. This training and support has given all the Champions the confidence to carry out this role. The support which the Mosaic project officers have provided to the Community Champions has been very good and warmly welcomed. However, the project officer posts were all part time (2/5 FTE), and some Community Champions were frustrated that their availability was therefore somewhat limited.

There is strong interest from Community Champions in continuing their role after the project ends, particularly through activities which involve telling people about the National Parks and organising visits. A small majority are interested in working with the National Park Authorities on equalities issues and through advisory groups.

2.2 Organisational change

There are few tangible signs that Mosaic has influenced organisational change within the NPAs.

In terms of corporate commitments to promoting inclusion, these were already in place when Mosaic started. By the end of Mosaic, the NPA commitments to social inclusion are more ambitious and more clearly stated, notably in the *National Parks in Wales Social Inclusion and Child Poverty Strategy and Action Plan 2014-16*. Although Mosaic has not been the main driver behind this, the project has been influential in providing practical examples of actions to increase social inclusion, and the plan was informed by consultation with Community Champions.

In terms of actual organisational changes achieved during the Mosaic project period, some changes have been introduced including the Brecon Beacons 'Fair Play' fund and the Snowdonia NPA Equality Forum. The Diversity Training, delivered by Mosaic Champions and project staff, has engaged a wider pool of NPA and YHA staff in discussions about practical measures to increase ethnic minority participation in the National Parks, which may result in concrete organisational changes in the future.

The three NPAs are confident that a main area of organisational change achieved through Mosaic is in their communications materials. Almost all the NPA staff interviewed for this evaluation reported that Mosaic had helped the organisation to become more aware of the importance of reflecting diversity on their website, in brochures, newsletters and other communication materials. However, the representation of diversity within public communications materials has not increased for all the National Parks. Images of ethnic minority people are very low on two of the National Park websites and come nowhere close to reflecting the ethnic diversity of the Welsh population.

Representation is a major barrier for ethnic minorities and other groups which feel excluded from the National Parks. The Champions in this, and other Mosaic projects, have clearly articulated that when websites and other communications fail to include images of ethnic minority people, it conveys a message that the National Parks are "not for people like me". The poor representation of ethnic diversity in the National Park communications is disappointing. This could have been an area where Mosaic identified a problem, developed a solution and, critically, monitored the implementation of this and provided structured feedback to the NPAs on progress.

The library of diverse images built up through Mosaic may be used by the NPAs in future communications. The NPAs should review representation of diversity within their public communications on a regular basis, as part of their Strategic Equality Plan review, and take action to improve the situation as necessary.

The under-use of mystery shopping was a missed opportunity for the project to develop a Champion-led, evidence-based approach to influencing the NPAs and YHA on equalities issues.

2.3 Community Champions influencing the National Park Authorities

The Community Champions have had some influence on the NPAs. The influence of Community Champions has been at the level of inter-personal contact, through spending time together and discussions at Group Leader Visits, Annual Events, Regional Feedback Forums and other events. NPA staff feel that their contact with the Champions has raised their awareness of the barriers which prevent some communities from enjoying the National Parks. They have found the Champions 'inspiring' and have learned a lot from them.

The Mosaic ambitions for Community Champions to influence the NPAs through more formal mechanisms and processes have not been achieved. Aside from the Snowdonia NPA Equality Forum, there have not been any appointments of Champions to NPA governance or advisory groups. Very few opportunities have arisen and no Champions felt ready or able to take on the commitment this entails. Towards the end of the project a few Champions have put themselves forward to take part in a Welsh Government scheme to shadow NPA members with a view to applying to become a member or take on other public roles in the future.

2.4 Relationships between the National Parks and the BME sector

The Mosaic project has helped to build relationships between the National Parks and the local ethnic minority voluntary sector. Some of the Community Champions are carrying out this role as representatives of voluntary and community organisations, and in developing relationships with individual Champions the NPAs have at the same time built links with those organisations.

One new ethnic minority organisation has been established through the project, Diversity Outdoors, and two other groups are being developed. The NPAs are committed to maintaining a relationship with these organisations and it is unlikely that the two new organisations will survive without support from the NPAs at this stage.

The longer term outlook for relationships between the National Parks and the local ethnic minority voluntary sector is bleak. The ethnic minority voluntary sector has become increasingly fragile across Wales, with many groups reported to have closed down. Out of six ethnic minority organisations interviewed at the baseline evaluation stage, we were only able to interview two for the final evaluation, as staff have left. Of the two ethnic minority organisations interviewed, one is due to close shortly because it lacks funding to continue.

2.5 Ethnic minority visitors to the National Parks

As a result of Mosaic, many people from ethnic minority communities have visited the National Parks for the first time. These are people from some of the most socially excluded populations in Wales, such as ethnic minority carers. It is almost certain that the people introduced to the National Parks through Mosaic would never otherwise have visited.

There is anecdotal evidence that the number of ethnic minority visitors in the National Parks has increased over the Mosaic project period. People who have worked in the National Parks for many years report an increase in ethnic minority visitor numbers and, in some cases, that they are now seeing ethnic minority visitors for the first time.

The number of ethnic minority visitors to the National Parks has certainly increased through Mosaic. The project monitoring data shows that 1,270 people were introduced to the National Parks through visits organised by Community Champions. The results from survey respondents as part of this evaluation show that perhaps as many as 2,200 ethnic minority people have been introduced through visits. In addition, at least 1,200 and as many as 5,500 ethnic minority people have found out about the National Parks from events and discussions with the Community Champions. We do not know how many of these people will go on to visit the National Parks, but however small the number, every visitor will be someone who would not have gone to the National Parks without the input from Mosaic.

Although the actual number of ethnic minority visitors has increased through Mosaic, in the absence of any data on overall visitor numbers it is not possible to say whether the proportion of ethnic minority visitors to the National Parks has increased. In order to monitor the outcomes from the actions which the NPAs have committed to in the Social Inclusion Action Plans, including to improve access for ethnic minorities, it is essential that they implement some robust form of visitor count which includes ethnic monitoring.

There is a high degree of confidence that Mosaic has made a difference within ethnic minority communities. There are numerous benefits for the communities involved and those which are most valued include: promoting cohesion and integration by bringing together groups of people from different backgrounds who would not normally interact; the opportunity to meet new people from different backgrounds; feeling that they belong to Wales; sharing their love of nature and the outdoors with like-minded people; remembering the landscapes from their countries of origin and as a result feeling a greater sense of connection with Wales.

2.6 Relations between urban ethnic minority communities and rural communities

Mosaic has built new relationships between ethnic minority communities and rural communities in the National Parks, and helped to improve existing relationships.

There is strong support from rural organisations for the objective of encouraging people from all communities to enjoy the National Parks. There is agreement that the Mosaic aim of developing long term engagement between ethnic minority communities and National Parks is important, although this is seen as less of a priority than objectives for protecting the National Park landscapes and managing budget cuts.

2.7 Wider strategic outcomes

Mosaic has made a useful contribution to the social inclusion agenda in Wales, primarily through providing practical examples of successful actions to promote access to the National Parks for under-represented groups. This has given the NPAs

some clear ideas of actions which they will implement through their Social Inclusion Plans in the next few years.

There is a strong interest from the Mosaic partners in the mental and physical health benefits from using the National Parks and the contribution which this can make to the Welsh Government's priority to tackle inequalities in health. The Mosaic project team has produced a short report based on the Champions' views of the health benefits of the National Parks. This work will be expanded if the planned follow up project to Mosaic is successful in securing funding. The proposed new project will include an action research strand focused on evidencing the health benefits for excluded groups from improved access to the National Parks. The interim evaluation report highlighted the lack of evidence in this field. The proposed action research is very much needed and should make an important contribution to wider understanding of the benefits from access to the natural environment, particularly for mental health and well-being.

2.8 Project management

Project management has been very good, within the limitations of the resources available. All the Mosaic team posts were part time. The Mosaic project team worked very hard to deliver the project objectives, but have not had enough time to give sufficient attention to all of these. In particular, the limited resource for project management has not allowed for more than day to day management and monitoring, with the inevitable consequence that there just has not been time to invest in the project's strategic ambitions.

3. SUSTAINABILITY

There has been a strong focus on sustainability from the outset of the Mosaic project. Plans in place to ensure sustainability of the Mosaic outcomes include:

- The Mosaic Cymru Succession Framework, produced by CNP and agreed by all project partners. This commits the partners to continuing support for the Community Champions and continuing to embed equality and diversity within the strategic and business planning of each organisation.
- All project partners are involved in a new project proposal, currently seeking funding, which would build on the Mosaic model and aim to widen access to the National Parks for socially excluded communities in urban areas of Wales.
- The Welsh Government is funding a pilot work shadowing initiative with Brecon Beacons NPA which will carry forward one element of Mosaic. This scheme will provide work-shadowing opportunities and support for people from communities which are traditionally under-represented on the National Park Authorities, with the aim of increasing the diversity of the National Park Authorities' membership.

The Champions are very committed to continuing their role; they feel passionate about the National Parks and want other people to share this experience. They strongly welcome the commitments from CNP and the NPAs to continue their support for Champions after the project ends. They are confident that the NPAs will

continue to recognise and support their role as Champions of the National Parks. They are less confident that the YHA will recognise the Champion role after Mosaic ends; several Champions had poor experiences when trying to book youth hostels using the Mosaic discount rate offered by YHA.

The Champions will try to continue their activities to introduce people to the National Parks, with or without the active support of the project partners. They think the biggest barriers to this will be access to transport and funding. They are confident that they will be able to make use of whatever transport and funding are available, but not confident that these will be sufficient to enable as many people to access the National Parks as would want to.

Three clusters of Champions have formed; Diversity Outdoors in Cardiff, an organisation of Champions which is being established in north Wales and a group of Champions engaged with the Brecon Beacons National Park. Supporting the development of Champion groups has been an important aim for Mosaic, with the intention that these groups will help to sustain the Champion activities after the project ends. This is certainly the perspective from the NPAs; Diversity Outdoors is seen as an important way in which Pembrokeshire Coast NPA can maintain its links with ethnic minority communities in the future. There is less confidence from the Champions that the cluster groups are important for sustainability. The Champion survey respondents who are not involved in clusters are as committed to continuing their role as those who are. Some Champions believe that the cluster groups are unnecessary and a potential distraction for the Champions who “just want to get on with it”. There is no evidence from previous Mosaic projects which demonstrates whether clusters of Champions have a more sustainable future than individual Champions. It would be useful for CNP to investigate this.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1** The partner organisations should aim to increase the diversity of the images used to represent and promote the National Parks and youth hostels so that potential visitors can readily see that ethnic minority people visit and are welcome to visit the National Parks. To monitor achievement of this, partners should carry out content analysis of their public communication materials on a regular basis. For the NPAs, this should take place annually as part of their Strategic Equality Plan reviews.
- 4.2** CNP should consider conducting a study of whether cluster groups established in previous Mosaic projects have increased the sustainability of active Champions in those areas. Future projects to promote access to the National Parks for excluded populations should ensure that ethnic minority communities are not overlooked in this.
- 4.3** The NPAs will need to ensure that their commitments to supporting the organisations established by the Community Champions are delivered, as without practical support and resources these organisations will struggle to survive.

- 4.4** The NPAs will need regular, robust data on visitor numbers which includes information on ethnicity, in order to measure achievement of the outcomes set out in their Social Inclusion Plans.
- 4.5** The action research element of the proposed successor project is vital. It should provide much needed evidence of the value of the natural environment for mental health and well-being.
- 4.6** In any future projects which use the Mosaic model, a more structured approach should be taken to influencing organisational change through Champions' feedback. There should be more systematic collection of feedback through co-ordinated mystery shopping and other research activities. The results should be presented to NPAs along with recommendations for actions. The progress of NPAs in responding to these recommendations should be monitored.