



## Review of the Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Young Ranger Scheme

*"Something really fun"*

*"Amazing"*

*"Its better than school!"*

*"Really fun and interesting"*

*"I think that you learn lots of new skills and knowledge that other groups don't get"*

*"It can be fun, but not all the time!"*

*"Fun, exciting, good to meet friends"*

*"Interesting but sometimes a bit boring!"*

*"Amazingly very good and fun"*

The Young Rangers



I only went out for a walk, and finally concluded  
to stay out till sundown; for going out, I found,  
was really going in.

John Muir

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## 1.0 Executive Summary

For a small staff unit with a diverse range of responsibilities and functions to deliver, the team has developed a first class Young Ranger Scheme. In the absence of external funding they have been able to run the scheme, from its core budget, to meet its original aspirations and aims, which are as relevant today as they were in 2005 when the scheme was launched. They have also successfully followed the Europarc Federations guiding principles and met the essential and desirable requirements of running a Young/Junior Ranger Scheme. The range of activities offered allow the participants to gain much from the scheme, including being outdoors, achieving several awards in life skills and the activities generally proved fun and enjoyable to the young people. With the exception of the Cairngorms, the other Young/Junior Ranger Schemes reviewed all had the benefit of some external funding to support them and as a result have been able to deploy more resources and develop additional attributes that the Mendip Hills have not been able to do. For example, several of these schemes have been able to appoint a dedicated officer to co-ordinate the programme of activities and in some they also had administrative support for the running of the scheme. In our review of the different programmes/schemes one of the best examples of excellence has come from the Mendip Hills. We have been impressed by the way that the scheme supports the progression of the Young Rangers through to Volunteer Rangers. No other scheme<sup>1</sup> had such an approach in place and the AONB manager and staff are to be applauded for this innovative approach.

The review process has involved consulting a greater number of people than originally anticipated, but we believe that it was necessary to gain a better understanding of what the scheme is offering and delivering against its stated aims and those of the Europarc Federation. It also was very helpful to talk to several new potential partner bodies



Picture 1. The Mendip Hills Young Rangers with Andy Mallender (Projects Officer) and some Advanced Young Rangers

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<sup>1</sup> The Cairngorms National Park now offer a follow up scheme for those who participated last year with a view to encouraging the participants to become ambassadors for the National Park.

## 1.1 Recommendations

Recommendation 1: That the AONB Unit organise a series of press and media opportunities to promote the success of the current scheme.

Recommendation 2: That in the future development of the Young Ranger Scheme, the staff unit and partners work closely with other providers to maximise on the opportunities afforded.

Recommendation 3: That the AONB staff unit remain responsible for the management/co-ordination of any future scheme(s) to meet the guiding principals and essential requirements of the Europarc Federation Junior Ranger Scheme.

Recommendation 4: That the 16 attributes of good and or excellent practice form part of the framework for developing the Young Rangers Scheme.

Recommendation 5: That both Young and Advanced Young Rangers are involved in the development and planning of future schemes.

Recommendation 6: That a communication strategy is developed to support the aims and objectives of the scheme.

Recommendation 7: That to ensure the successful development of the Young Ranger Scheme, any funding application should include proposals for running costs and some form of staff support.

Recommendation 8: That the main focus for the AONB staff unit and partners would be to agree the detail of the new scheme rather than spend time discussing structures.

Recommendation 9: That the Young Ranger Scheme is extended to communities outside the immediate environment of the Mendip Hills.

Recommendation 10: To build upon their commitment to develop the skills of young people the AONB unit and partners should explore the potential of looking to introduce vocational, BTEC qualifications and/or an apprenticeship scheme for the Advanced Young Rangers.

Recommendation 11: That the AONB unit organises the facilitated workshops as soon as possible with their current and potential future partners to explore ways to build upon and develop the current Young Ranger Scheme.

**Observation;** The AONB unit maximises on the opportunities with their partners to incorporate the vision for the Mendips into any organised activity run by their partners.

## 2.0 Methodology

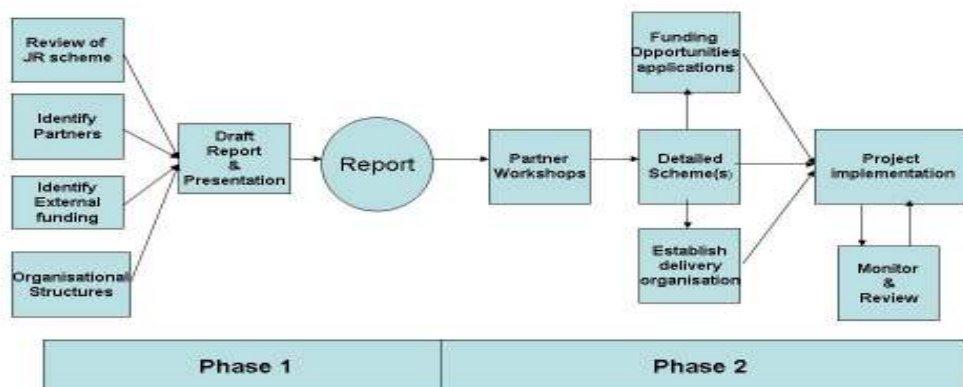
### 2.1 The project brief was to;

1. Provide an independent review of the current scheme and make recommendations for change/new scheme
2. Identify potential partners and their roles
3. Identify external funding for the scheme
4. Recommend the appropriate organisational set up e.g. charitable status to maximise funding potential and sustainability for the scheme

Following appointment we met with the clients to:

1. Agree the final methodology and timetable.  
Source reference documents and papers  
Identify and agree potential partners and consultees.
2. Conduct desk based study to (i) review and evaluate the aims, objectives and programmes of current activities and related documents, (ii) review other UK Junior ranger projects and contact the Europarc JR coordinator to explore examples of good practice in Europe. Interview key people (participants and others involved) as identified with the client.
3. Conduct telephone interviews with potential partners and contact the Local Education Authorities.
4. Explore and review the criteria for HLF, EU programmes and grants from local authorities
5. Initially identify possible businesses to sponsor programme.
6. Review possible governance structures for future activities and project delivery.
7. The above steps would be drawn together into a draft report and presentation prior to the final report being drafted.
8. We have also agreed that following production of this review we will hold 2 facilitated workshops with key partners prior to putting together a detailed action and implementation plan. The details of which would be based upon contact with the potential funding bodies.

**Figure 1. The review of the Young Ranger Scheme and its future development**



## **3.0 Review of Young Ranger Scheme**

### **3.1 Mendip Hills Young Rangers Scheme**

The Mendip Hills AONB unit introduced a Young Rangers Scheme (YRS) in 2005. The aims of the scheme are;

- Increase awareness and understanding of the significance of the AONB amongst young people- future custodians of the landscape
- Reach parents/communities through the young people involved
- Provide training and life skills to young people to enjoy the AONB
- To develop young people to become Volunteer Rangers

As part of a structured scheme to develop young people to become Volunteer Rangers, participants on the successful completion of the Young Ranger Scheme are given the opportunity to become an Advanced Young Ranger. At the age of 18 they can then become a Volunteer Ranger. At the moment there are 15 Young Rangers, 8 Advanced Young Rangers registered and two have progressed to become Volunteer Rangers.

Participants are selected from local schools in and around the Mendip Hills AONB. The scheme is offered as part of a European initiative to give young people the opportunity to find out about a protected landscape and learn about conservation techniques in a hands-on practical way. It is modelled on the Europarc Federation Young Ranger Scheme. At the start of each new intake, there is a Welcome Evening for participants and their parents/guardians.

Twenty monthly Saturday sessions are offered over the two year period and the Young Rangers have the opportunity to learn about the special qualities of the Mendip Hills through their participation in a number of outdoor activities and achieve a number of recognised qualifications including First Aid, navigation and the John Muir Award. An overnight camp is included in the annual programme. The balance of the programme is based on practical activities including conservation tasks and the lifelong skills training. To minimise transport costs several of the activities include walking.

The scheme is offered to a maximum of 15 young people. This limit is set on the basis of the size of a minibus. Considerable thought is put into the planning of the programme. The responsibility for planning and running the scheme rests with the Projects Officer. All staff involved are vetted through the enhanced CRB checks. St Hugh's a local church, adjacent to the Charterhouse Centre where the office for the Mendips Hills AONB unit is located, is used as the base for the scheme. To reach Charterhouse, as there is no public transport, participants can only access it by private vehicles. The programme of activities is set by the AONB staff. All participants are provided with a uniform and rucksack. To encourage commitment to the scheme a notional charge of £50 is made. The 2009/10 programme is the third intake of young people.

The AONB unit currently finances the scheme from its core funding. In addition to this there are staff costs and the contributions in kind from volunteers who are brought in to assist and run additional activities. There is volunteer administrative support and helpers who assist with some of the activities. All volunteers have worked with the scheme before and are given a briefing prior to each of the activities. The annual budget for the scheme has risen from £1,750 in 2005/6 to just under £3,000 in 2010/11. Staff costs will be in the region of just under £7,000 for 2010/11. Therefore the direct costs for both the Young and Advanced Young Ranger Scheme in the current financial year are in the order of £10,000. This equates to £430 per participant. This does not factor in the value of the practical conservation work to the AONB that the Young Rangers carry out.

In the review of the scheme views were sought from

1. Young Rangers
2. Advanced Young Rangers
3. Volunteer Rangers
4. Parents
5. Partner Bodies
6. Staff involved (these were on the operational aspects of the scheme).

### **3.2 Young Rangers**

The Young Rangers are given opportunities to give both formal and informal feedback on the activities that they participate in. There is recognition that not all the participants fill in the feedback forms but the records are put into a spreadsheet and generally show a high level of positive feedback. In addition to reviewing these, a focus group session was held with 9 of the Young Rangers following their Landscape Detectives activity on the 19<sup>th</sup> June 2010. A range of questions were asked to assess their views on the scheme. The summary answers are presented in the following table.

How they described Young Rangers, some comments.

“Something really fun”
“Amazing”
“It’s better than school!”
“Really fun and interesting”
“I think that you learn lots of new skills and knowledge that other groups don’t get”
“It can be fun, but not all the time!”
“Fun, exciting, good to meet friends”
“Interesting but sometimes a bit boring!”
“Amazingly very good and fun”

**Table 1. Young Ranger responses to questions on the scheme.**

	Question	Summary response
1	Do they know why the Mendips are so special?	All YR's were able to give several reasons, including mentioning its; history; landscape; history; resources; recreation; activities; plants and animals to their lots to do and that they are pretty.
2	What do they tell their parents/teachers about the YRS?	A wide range of responses around what they learned, their feelings (tired/worn out) to how much they enjoyed it.
3	What sort of things do they get up to as YR's?	All were really enthusiastic to tell what they had done over the year. As a group they mentioned all the different things that they had done.
4	Is there anything else that they would like to do?	They would like to do more physical outdoor activities, bush craft activities, farm visits, quad biking and nature study. Generally more hands on and active pursuits.
5	Are the activities challenging/interesting/fun?	Mixture of responses from mostly to sometimes. Those who said mostly did not like long walks and the rain.
6	Why did they want to be a YR?	It was seen as; something different and challenging; the programme/activities sounded good/fun; an opportunity to experience the outdoors, make new friends and learn; Something to do! I like the name.
7	By being a Young Ranger has this influenced your thoughts about your future career and/or training? Would they like to be a ranger when they grow up? Why? Why not?	Girls said no. Boys said yes. Generally because they want to do something outdoors.
8	Are they ever consulted about the activities you do?	Yes and welcomed the chance to discuss the activities for year 2.
9	What do their friends think of their activities in the YRS? Would they like to join?	Different views from those in the town areas to those living in the rural areas. In rural areas there was an interest in what they did, in town areas, their friends thought it sounded boring.
10	Are Saturdays the best day for activities?	The majority response was yes, followed by Sunday, three wanted them on school days!
11	Would another day/evening of the week be better?	They thought that evenings would not be long enough, you needed a day.
12	Rather than come once a month, would it be better to have all the activities in a block? E.g. over a period of days in the summer or over 4 or 5 weekends?	Very strong view that having it on a regular basis gave them something to look forward to. Also for some they were able to develop friends outside their normal peer group and that was good.
13	Would the YR Scheme be as exciting if their parents were involved?	No and did not want the Advanced Rangers to help either.
14	Are they a member of any other youth organisation?	All participated in other groups.

### 3.3 Advanced Young Rangers

Four of the eight Advanced Young Rangers were interviewed using a similar format to the above set of questions used for the Young rangers. This was carried out in a meeting in which they were also discussing the detailed logistics of running the 2010 Europarc Junior Ranger Camp. Having graduated from the Young Rangers Scheme, this was an opportunity to discuss the previous two Young Ranger programmes (2005/6 and 2007/8) with them.

The Advanced Young Rangers were very enthusiastic about the Young Ranger Scheme and their progression on to being Advanced Rangers. They now have an excellent understanding of why the Mendip Hills are so special and spoke with confidence on the reasons for its designation as an AONB. They stated that their parents show a keen interest in what they do in the Mendip Hills and gave them support. However they said that their teachers were not really interested unless one had a specific interest through their subject topic. Again with their friends there was the strong view that those who lived in the towns, were not interested in outdoor activities and what they did in the Mendip Hills. Similar to the Young Rangers they enjoyed the range of activities that they had been offered and again suggested some more hands on activities such as; climbing; dam building; water activities; drystone walling and hedging. Again there was an issue over the amount of walking undertaken. They all felt that the activities they undertook were challenging, fun and interesting.

Their reason for becoming a Young Ranger was principally that they wanted to know more about the area and as a result of the schemes; they generally had been influenced to think about their future careers as a result of their experiences.

They were asked to come up with a key statement to describe the scheme.

*“Really fun”*

*“It’s the fun side of the outdoors!”*

*“Fun, interesting and I really know a lot”*

*“Really good, but depends what group you are in”*

Overall they felt that Saturday was the best day of the week to hold the activities. Sundays were seen as “family” days. It was felt that in the summer there was an opportunity to increase the frequency to fortnightly activities. When they considered the other possible model of holding a 5 or 10 day scheme, it was felt that this would be intensive with too much information to absorb. The scheme in its current format allowed for the bonding of good relationships (with most members) which have lasted beyond the scheme and their involvement was seen as a key factor in their development and building of their self esteem and confidence.

The Advanced Youth Rangers did not feel that parental involvement would be a positive step. The scheme allowed them space to do something different outside the parental influence. They also felt that the potential of social networking was a good way to keep in touch with one another and indeed the Advanced Ranger who attended last year’s Europarc Junior Ranger Camp, still kept in contact with the many friends made in Spain.

### 3.4 Volunteer Rangers

Two volunteer rangers who participated in the first Young Ranger Scheme both spoke with great enthusiasm of the scheme and their experiences and the skills and knowledge that they had developed as a result of their participation. One in particular was passionate about wanting to work in the outdoors but lack of job opportunities has necessitated taking a job in another sector.

Figure 2. The Young Ranger programme 2009-2010



**MENDIP HILLS AONB YOUNG RANGER SCHEME –  
YEAR ONE FINAL PROGRAMME 2009 – 2010**  
Updated January 2010 **Note programme changes highlighted in yellow**

Date	Activity/Event	Meeting Place	Time
15 September 2009	Welcome Evening	St Hugh's, Charterhouse	7.00pm – 8.30pm
19 September 2009	Ice Breaker Introductory Session Blackmoor Reserve Ramble	St Hugh's, Charterhouse	10.00am – 3.30pm
10 October 2009	Bird Box Making/Installation Blackmoor Climate Monitoring	St Hugh's, Charterhouse	10.00am – 3.30pm
7 November 2009	Map Reading Skills Navigational Orienteering Challenge	St Hugh's, Charterhouse	10.00am – 3.30pm
5 December 2009	Visit to Fernhill Farm Europarc camp planning Making Christmas wreaths	Fernhill Farm (Lunch provided)	10.00am – 3.30pm
16 January 2010	First Aid Training Course	St Hugh's, Charterhouse	10.00am – 3.30pm
27 February 2010	Blackmoor Conservation Task & Introduction to the John Muir Award	St Hugh's, Charterhouse	10.00am – 3.30pm
26 - 28 March 2010	Weekend camp	Goblin Combe	Fri 6.00pm – Sun 2.00pm
24 April 2010	Farming and Landuse in the Mendip Hills	St Hughes, Charterhouse	10.00am – 3.30pm
22 May 2010	Outdoor Adventure: Caving or climbing	St Hughes, Charterhouse	10.00am – 4.00pm
19 June 2010	Landscape Detectives	St Hugh's, Charterhouse	10.00am – 3.30pm
17 July 2010	Trip to Quantocks and navigation challenge.	St Hughes, Charterhouse	9.30am – 4.30pm

NB - There is no meeting in August due to school holidays

### 3.5 Parents

Four parents very kindly agreed to be interviewed. The summary results are presented in the following table.

Table 2. Summary of parents' responses.

	QUESTION	SUMMARY OF RESPONSES
1	What influenced them to allow their child to join the YRs?	Heard about it from school and it sounded really good. Child very enthusiastic to join; wanted to be outdoors. Wanted to join as elder sister was so enthusiastic about it. Parent was very supportive and let child join.
2	What are your views and thoughts on the activities offered? Are you happy with the activities they participate in?	Very impressed, good range of activities, learning a lot, providing a lot of insight and introduction into the area and its wildlife. Very impressed providing lots of fun and learning. Activities very good and varied. Really pleased with range of very imaginative activities.
3	Are they happy that all activities take place on a Saturday?	Saturday is a good day, Sundays are a possibility. Would like to see it run twice a month.
4	What would they think if the YR was run over a week to 10 days period or over a series of weekends?	It would be more difficult with a block of activities and would clash with other things in the summer. Having it once a month means that we can plan other activities around it.
5	Is £50 a reasonable fee for the 2 year long programme?	All said it was very reasonable. Yes, it also builds in commitment to attend.
6	Would they be prepared to pay more? e.g. would you be prepared to pay a registration fee plus a fee for each of the activities? Would you be prepared to pay on an annual basis to reflect a fee that would cover the costs of the activities?	Although most would be prepared to pay a bit more, for the less well off families the price, if increased, would be difficult but would be worth it for what the young people get. The one off fee makes it easier to budget but an annual fee may be an alternative approach. One parent felt it was difficult to answer but felt it might put people off and make it less inclusive.
7	YRs get training in a range of life skills – can they see any difference in their child as a result of these?	Yes, most definitely. Comments included; much more aware of the surroundings; a lot more tolerant of their friends; they get the opportunity to see others not so well behaved; One parent not sure.
8	Would you be prepared to help out? e.g. transport/activities/talks.	Happy to help out but depends on activities and their skills and knowledge. Transport wouldn't be a problem but clarification required on insurance. One parent happy to help but not sure that they had all the necessary skills.
9	As a result of their child's participation in the YR scheme, do they tell others about what they do? e.g. teachers/local organisations.	Yes the children certainly tell other friends and teachers. This is sometimes mentioned by teachers at teacher/parent nights about the young people's enthusiasm for the scheme and the different things that they get to do. Now wants to join the Advanced Rangers. Being a member will help them with their DoE award.
10	Are their children members of any other youth organisation? Scouts/guides/youth club/sports club.	2 were the others 2 weren't.
11	Do you feel that participation in the YR scheme is influencing their child's thoughts on a future career/training?	Two parents felt yes, one no. One parent who has had two children go to Young Rangers felt that it was difficult to say but certainly the broader skills base gave them a better idea of what subjects to choose at school.

### **3.6 The Young Ranger Scheme's relevance to stated aims of the MHAONB and the Europarc Guidelines**

A key feature of the Young Ranger Scheme is its stated aims and the link to the Mendip Hills AONB management plan. In the current management plan 2009-2014 a clear vision and management objectives have been set for the Mendip Hills. The activities that are offered in the YRS link to two of these<sup>2</sup>.

#### ***In 20 years time there will be:***

*Wide understanding and appreciation of the Mendip Hills as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty for its distinctive geology, biodiversity, historic, cultural and natural features, all of which are conserved and enhanced. The impact of climate changes in relation to these is understood.*

*Significant numbers of the local community directly engaged in the conservation and enhancement of the Mendip Hills AONB, either through direct employment in the rural economy, or as custodians of the landscape influencing decision makers or volunteering.*

#### **Mendip Hills AONB Objectives relevant to Young ranger review:**

##### **LANDSCAPE**

L3 Provide and encourage training provision on land management to care for and promote the landscape and its special qualities

L4 Increase awareness and appreciation of the purposes of designation and the special qualities of the AONB to residents and visitors

##### **PARTICIPATION**

P1 Increase the opportunities for volunteering and the range of people participating, to benefit the environment, peoples well being and the local community

P2 Link local people with their immediate area through community projects that have mutual environment and community benefit

P3 Promote the Mendip Hills as an educational resource for all ages.

The scheme is based upon the Europarc model. The Europarc Federation actively supports and encourages its members to develop Junior/Young Ranger Schemes. Following a major project in central Europe in 2002 the Federation published a report<sup>3</sup> which promoted a model concept to help protected area managers to plan and implement Junior Ranger activities. This included a planning process (see figure 3) to help provide clear and logical guidance to staff charged with running Junior/Youth ranger schemes. This report provided the focus for encouraging member bodies to run activities and led to the establishment of the annual Europarc Junior Rangers camp. This camp brings young people, mentors and protected area staff together to share and exchange good practice and help build a sustainable and active European network of young people for the future.

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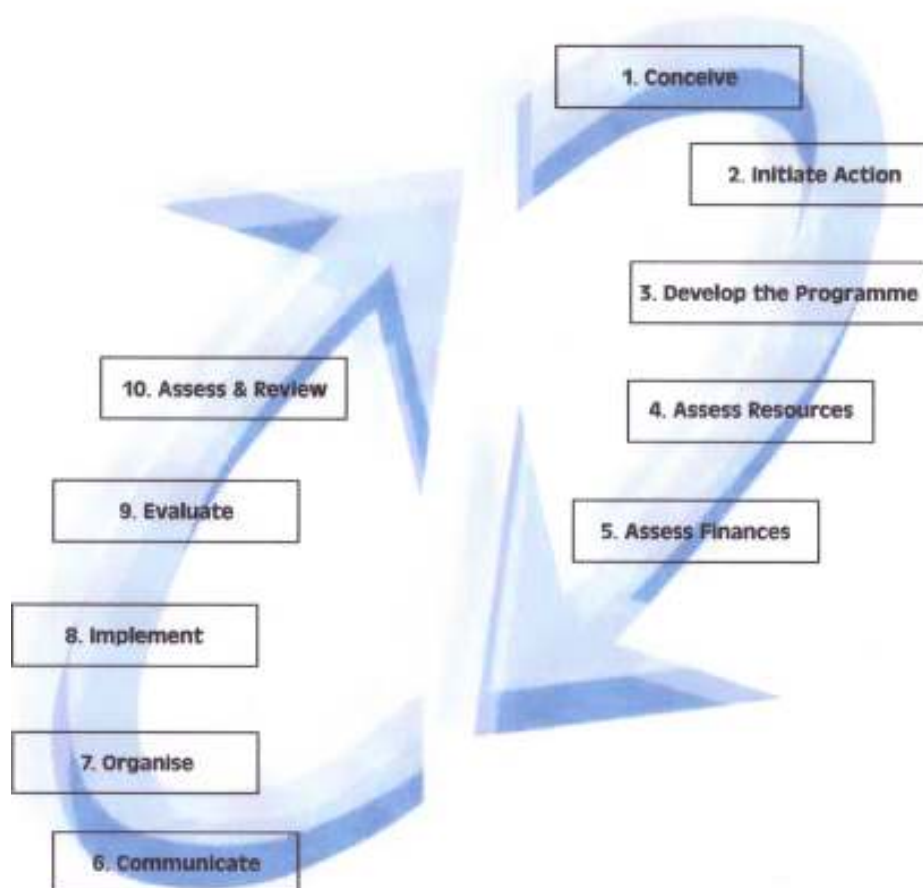
<sup>2</sup> Mendip Hills AONB Management Plan 2009-2014

<sup>3</sup> Junior Rangers: Actions to Preserve Europe's Natural and Cultural Heritage, Europarc Federation 2003

In 2008 a further study<sup>4</sup> of several Junior Ranger projects across Europe was carried out and this was followed in 2009 by the publication of the guiding principles and values<sup>5</sup> that should be used to plan and run such activities.

Figure 3. The Europarc Federation Junior Ranger Planning Process

**The "Junior Ranger planning process":**



<sup>4</sup> Junior Ranger Project in Europe, Study Report 2008, Květa Černohlávková Europarc Federation

<sup>5</sup> JUNIOR RANGER SUMMIT REPORT, Wildniscamp am Falkenstein, Zwieslerwaldhaus, 12-13 December 2008

Table 3. Checklist of the current aims of the Young Ranger Scheme along with the Europarc principles and values

<b>Aims</b>	<b>Achieved/meets criteria</b>	<b>Justification/evidence</b>
<b>1. MHAONB Management Plan Objectives and Young Ranger Aims</b>		
Increase awareness and understanding of the significance of the AONB amongst young people- future custodians of the landscape	Yes	From evaluation forms, informal feedback, feedback from youth rangers, parents and staff
Reach parents/communities though the young people involved	Parents yes, community difficult to quantify	Feedback from parents confirms that they get feedback. Press articles in local communities
Provide training and life skills to young people to enjoy the AONB	Yes	1 <sup>st</sup> Aid and Navigation certificates Excellent proposed use of the John Muir award scheme
To develop young people to become Volunteer Rangers	Yes	The enthusiasm and commitment from the participants very good. Two have become volunteer rangers.
Landscape Management Objectives	Yes	Programme and feedback on the scheme
Participation Management Objectives	Yes	Programme and feedback on the scheme
<b>2. Europarc Federation</b>		
<b>Guiding Principles</b>		
Experiential, practical, fun and inspirational activities in protected areas, and managed by Rangers, according to the idea of “learning by doing”;	Yes	Evaluation from Young and Advanced Rangers. Focus groups held.
Is a non discriminatory programme, which requires a professional approach and high quality standard	Yes	Issue over transport but the scheme clearly reaches all sectors of the local communities
Aspire to high environmental standards	Yes	The annual programme and activities offered
Addressed to promote international exchange, to develop positive, cooperative and social skills, and to encourage the active citizenship of youths	Yes	Attendance by Young Rangers at the annual Europarc Junior Ranger camp. Ongoing contact with others from EF junior ranger camp.
Connection between EUROPARC protected areas and “local” young people.	Yes	Attendance at junior ranger camps and running of 2010 camp
Cooperation between Rangers – Parks – EUROPARC Essential /recommended Components	Yes	Visits organised to other protected landscapes
Activities are addressed to children and youth, starting from - at least -11 years old	Yes	Scheme is offered to 11-15 year olds with progression to Advanced Ranger and then to Voluntary Ranger at 18
The activities are coordinated by the park and managed by the local Rangers	Yes	Run by project officer, partners and volunteers
The activities should provide real nature conservation work experiences, but can also include cultural and social topic, and most of them should be done in nature	Yes	Wide range of activities organised
A 5 days programme is the minimum required in each park	Yes	Runs monthly throughout the year over a 24 month period with annual camps.
Follow up activities must be planned by the Park Authority	Yes	In the current scheme progression is offered to Advanced and Voluntary Ranger level
Cooperation with other local associations	Yes	Wide range of bodies have an interest and some support the scheme
Uniform and other equipment for JRs;	Yes	All new YRs get a uniform
JR programme should become part of the ordinary park work (e.g. environmental education department) managed by Ranger Service in collaboration with other bodies of Park Authority	Yes	Managed by AONB manager and run by project officer
Involvement of parents, partners and local communities should be encouraged	Partly	Parents attend the induction and provide transport to the activity venue. A possible area for further exploration
A certificate or award should be adopted	Yes	1 <sup>st</sup> aid, navigation and the John Muir Award
The activities should have a regular frequency	Yes	Monthly
Involvement of JR in EUROPARC activities	Yes	Attendance at Junior Ranger camp Organising 2010 Junior Ranger Camp
Network of parks running JR programme and of European JR should be created and supported by EF	Yes	Europarc Atlantic Isles has started to engage with managers who are running YRs
Network of rangers managing JR programmes should be supported	Yes	EAI looking at this

### **3.7 Other Schemes**

As part of our research, we reviewed other work and Junior/Youth Ranger Projects that are being undertaken in the UK and we also sought information from the Europarc Federation on Junior Ranger Schemes. The Federation supports and encourages its members to consider running junior ranger programmes based upon their guiding concepts and structures agreed in 2009.

According to the Europarc Federation there are currently 32 protected areas involved with a Junior/Young Ranger scheme in 14 different countries. Several more are considering developing schemes. Although training is provided annually at the Federations General Assembly, this is restricted to those who attend. The Federation has supported an annual Junior Ranger Camp since 2003 with the venue for 2010 being the Mendip Hills. It further encourages members to use its website and newsletters to exchange and share examples of good practice and ideas. In the UK, the Atlantic Isles section has started to review how it can better support its members in the planning and implementing of YRS.

#### **Examples of good practice in the UK**

At the moment, there is no comprehensive data base on who is doing what within the UK. A meeting of parties interested in establishing a Junior Ranger network in the UK was held in January 2010 by Europarc Atlantic Isles. One outcome was to establish a “who is doing what in the UK” database. To date apart from those present at the meeting no further information has been forthcoming from the members of Europarc in the UK. As such within the time constraints set for the project we looked at 8 different schemes some run in protected landscapes and 3 from areas who are not members of the Europarc Federation. Detailed discussions were held with five of the eight selected.

Schemes reviewed in the UK (those marked with an \* were interviewed).

Peak District NP (PDNP)\*  
Northumberland Coast AONB (NCAONB)\*  
East Devon Council (EDC)\*  
Maldon District Council (MDC)\*  
White Cliffs Countryside Partnership (WCCP)  
Cairngorms National Park\* (CNP)  
North York Moors (NYMNP)  
Royal Parks Service (RPS)

Table 4 Overview of the schemes reviewed including funding sources and the staff involved

	Protected area/landscape	Partnership	Youth/Junior Ranger Scheme	Funding Sources	National or Local Award given	Dedicated staff	Uniform/ badge provided
Peak District NP	Yes	Yes	Yes	HLF	Yes	Yes (Part time)	Yes
Northumberland Coast AONB	Yes	Yes	Yes	Community Foundation; HLF; Access to Nature	Yes	No Rangers and Youth workers	Yes
East Devon Council	Yes	No	Yes	Initial 2 year grant from Natural England now core funding	No	Yes Education officer	No
Maldon District Council	No	No	Yes	Local Government Forum; PCT; Parish Councils	No	Yes (Part time)	No
White Cliffs Countryside Partnership	No	Yes	Yes	ERDF; HLF; Commercial; Local Councils	Yes	In house	Badges
Cairngorms National Park	Yes	Yes	Yes	Core funding	Yes	John Muir Award Manager	Yes
North York Moors NP <sup>6</sup>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Building Society	Now offer BTEC and apprenticeships	Rangers	
Royal Parks Service	No	Yes	Yes	Princes Trust RSPB/HLF Core funding	No	Education staff and volunteers	No

<sup>6</sup> Scheme has since been developed to provide apprenticeships and BTEC qualifications

## Findings

Most of the schemes started as a result of some form of external funding to engage with young people and raise their awareness and understanding of the special qualities of the area. The exception to this was the Cairngorms where they have a specific objective in their management plan to create a series of young ambassadors for the National Park and the Junior Ranger Scheme is funded from its core budget. The success of the level of external funding varies significantly from a few thousand pounds to £200,000 (PDNP). The PDNP scheme costs an average of £1,666 per attendee.

Funding for these schemes had been drawn down from a variety of sources, including;

Hosting body/council/authority core funding

Heritage Lottery Funding (Young Roots, Your Heritage and the Heritage Grants Programmes)

Leader+

Community Foundation (Local Government Association)

Government Agencies different funding streams

EU Youth in Action programme

Natural England Wild Spaces grant

Local Government Forum

Primary Care Trust

Parish Councils

Partner Bodies

Building Society

The level of resources available and the management rationale behind each of the schemes reviewed has meant that there is no one standard model or approach used in the organisation of the Junior/Young Rangers Schemes in the UK. Of those reviewed, all had a clear management rationale behind the establishment of the scheme. For those in the Europarc family, they have followed the guidance and principles provided to deliver on a programme to develop a range of skills and experiences that will help participants better understand the special qualities of the protected landscape, offer a national award and encourage participants to engage with the management of the area. The other schemes generally provided a range of activities and events offered on a “turn up” basis, some with a booking system, others allowing people to turn up on the day. These were undoubtedly popular and linked to specific management aims but were designed to raise awareness rather than develop the detailed understanding and conservation skills that the Europarc model provides. All the scheme organisers have worked hard to find the necessary funding and resources to run the schemes and in the one instance where further funding was not available (East Devon), the scheme was integrated into the core budget of the council. This variety of approaches and their subsequent developments has resulted in a wide range of excellent examples of good practice. For example, in the North York Moors they now offer BTEC qualifications for 14 to 18 year olds working with several local secondary schools and have recently introduced an apprenticeship scheme for 16-24 year olds.

Two of the schemes have embraced the John Muir Award to recognise the achievements of the young people (NCAONB and CNP). The John Muir Award is an environmental award scheme focused on wild places. It encourages awareness and responsibility for the natural environment, in a spirit of fun, adventure and exploration. Five of the schemes are run over a regular period throughout the year. One scheme (CNP) offers an intense five days of training in three regions of the Park, culminating in an awards ceremony. These are held in the local community for friends, family and invited guests. Several of the schemes provide clothing and badges to the members. This was particularly so in the case of those in the Europarc family.

The level and type of evaluations vary significantly; external grant sources often dictate the evaluation method; some will only conduct a full evaluation towards the end of the programme, others evaluate each activity. Some use the numbers attending as an assessment of its popularity and success.

The number of participants ranged from 9 (NCAONB) to 120 (PDNP) per year.

All interviewees believed that their scheme was innovative and were examples of good practice. It was not our role to assess or evaluate these, what we did was to focus on examples of good practice drawn from each as relayed to us by the scheme organiser.

Between the diverse and distinctive organisations running Junior/Youth Ranger schemes in the UK, there is no one model which stands out as the best exemplar project to follow. All have much to commend them and the enthusiasm of the staff that run them and those who participate. The following table provides 16 examples of good practice found in the 8 schemes reviewed. None of the schemes reviewed had all the 16 examples of good practice, but we believe that these will provide an excellent framework for others who may wish to plan and develop a Junior/Young Ranger Scheme.

**Table 5. Examples of good practice from other Junior/Young Ranger Schemes**

1.	<b>The scheme followed a clear planning process linked to their management objectives (mainly Europarc members)</b>
2.	<b>External funding especially HLF programmes being used to develop and support the schemes and innovative use of local funding opportunities (PDNP, MDC and NCAONB)</b>
3.	<b>Partnership arrangements with the local Young People and Family/Education services department. (PDNP, CNP and NCAONB)</b>
4.	<b>A well structured website, associated social media links and blogs (PDNP)</b>
5.	<b>The provision of a dedicated base location for activities and meetings and/or wet weather facility. (Most)</b>
6.	<b>An effective communication campaign to promote the scheme and events which could include newsletters (PDNP, CNP and MDC)</b>
7.	<b>Excellent liaison and regular contact with schools and youth groups (PDNP, NYM, CNP and NCAONB)</b>
8.	<b>The linking of the scheme to either recognised awards or awarding local achievement awards (most)</b>
9.	<b>The establishment of a partnership to deliver the service (NCAONB and CNP)</b>
10.	<b>The patronage of members on the authority/partnership to promote the scheme internally and externally (CNP, PDNP and NCAONB)</b>
11.	<b>A range of topical fun based activities (all)</b>
12.	<b>A qualitative monitoring and evaluation process (mainly Europarc members)</b>
13.	<b>The provision of a common identity for participants and/or protective/wet weather clothing (NYM, PDNP,CNP and NCAONB)</b>
14.	<b>Providing financial support via a travel allowance to improve accessibility to the scheme by the young people (NCAONB)</b>
15.	<b>A community event to celebrate the success of the young people in achieving their awards (CNP, NYM and NCAONB)</b>
16.	<b>A dedicated YRS officer (FT or PT) to plan, implement and deliver the scheme.</b>

## 4.0 Partner Organisations

The client identified several possible partners' organisations at the project inception meeting and in the process of conducting interviews we have spoken to several others. Discussions have been held with each to establish their current knowledge, interest and possible partnership engagement/role including attendance at the next stage when facilitated workshops will be held to discuss the future development/evolution of the current scheme.

1. Active Mendip (**AM**); An association of activity providers in the Mendips established as a community interest company. Working to support young people to get involved in activities. Very keen to support the development of the YRS. Could help in bringing young people in to experience a range of active opportunities.
2. Bath & NE Somerset (**B&NES**); View the YRS as an exciting project. Would like to engage with the scheme but it will depend on what it eventually will look like. Currently undergoing a major reorganisation and on the re-focusing of diminishing resources. The emphasis will need to be on the commissioning services for young people. Happy to be involved in the developmental stage as they are looking to develop new partnerships. Could provide a key role in advising on Government policy and how to structure future schemes in line with local commissioning of services.
3. Bristol Council (**BC**); no response received.
4. Bristol Water (**BW**); A privately owned water utilities company. Keep a watching brief on what is happening in the Mendip Hills. Keen to see what they can do to support YRS. No financial support available in the current financial year.
5. Charterhouse Centre (**CC**); no response received.
6. Fernhill Farm (**FF**); A privately run farm centre. Currently working very closely with the MHAONB in their organisation of the Europarc youth camp. Very keen to improve the understanding of the Mendip Hills by its visitors and want to help others and give support to the YRS. They are currently working very closely with the MHAONB in their organisation of the Europarc Junior Ranger camp A key role could be the development of activities to raise awareness of land management issues in the Mendip Hills.
7. Goblin Combe (**GC**); A local environmental/outdoor centre run as a charity. Very keen to engage further with the YRS and provide support and activities. Currently working very closely with the MHAONB in their organisation of the Europarc Junior Ranger camp. Would be prepared to consider taking a key role in future development with MHAONB, seeing the scheme as a great potential for growth and providing significant benefit to the area. Could provide a key role in providing support to the partnership in terms of grant applications, staff, accommodation and advice and guidance on activities.
8. Mendip Society (**MS**); Keen to attract younger people to balance their ageing membership. The approach and initiative would best be from outside the organisation, but one member would be happy to be involved in the workshop. At the moment the organisation is not in a position to provide a role, except what support a few members could offer.
9. Natural England (**NE**); National conservation government agency. Keen to support and potentially with linking up with some of their resources at

local reserves and engage their regional staff to support activities. Due to recent staff changes they can't say quite how it could be developed but keen to participate in future discussions. Could provide a key role in supporting the development of future programmes and in the provision of key local staff and activity venues.

10. National Trust (**NT**); National Charity, building and land managers and conservation body. Very keen to continue their support and work with MHAONB to develop the service. Potentially many opportunities and are currently recruiting an Outdoor Experience Officer. Keen to explore further possibilities. Could provide a key role in supporting the development of future programmes and in the provision of key local staff and activity venues.
11. North Somerset (**NSC**); no response received.
12. Somerset Youth Rural Project (**SYRP**); a charity working to support young people in rural areas. They run an annual youth conference at the Charterhouse Centre and offer a wide range and varied range of services to young people and very keen to support the development of the YRS and participate in future discussions. Could provide a key role in supporting the development of future programmes and in the provision of key local staff and supporting youth programmes and possibly activities for the Advanced Young Rangers and volunteers under 24.
13. Somerset Levels and Moors Local Action Group (**SLM**); A delivery organisation for the delivery of the rural grant scheme. Dependant on the project may be able to help and very interested in seeing what else they could do. Their main role would be the provision of advice on grant schemes.
14. Somerset County Council (**SCC**); statutory body and a large county council. Member of the AONB Partnership. Currently they do not have any funding although acknowledge the YRS as an excellent scheme. Would be prepared to offer advice provided funds were available. Could provide an advisory role.
15. Wildlife Trusts; Two wildlife trusts Avon (**AWT**) and Somerset (**SWT**). Both charities and very supportive of the YR scheme. There are issues with insurance and can not organise or lead activities for 11 to 15 year olds. Both have education and community/outreach staff. Both have reserves in the Mendip Hills, so subject to resolving insurance issues would be keen to explore how they could work in partnership to develop the programme.
16. Wells Museum (**WM**); A charity which run the Wells Museum. Currently undergoing a strategic review. They have an extensive resource including its outstanding fossil collection and caving material and literature. Potentially see themselves as one of the key gateway centres for the Mendip Hills. Very keen to engage and to see what support the museums in Axbridge and Weston super Mare could also provide. Could provide activities based around the museum collections and in specialised areas in the Mendip Hills.

The partners and potential partners were all very enthusiastic and complimentary about the YRS especially in the private and NGO sectors. Most are keen to be involved in the next stage to discuss how they can work together to develop the scheme. Several have resources that would be available including staff and locations where activities could be organised. The local councils while supportive and enthusiastic about the scheme are going through a period of great uncertainty and change as a result of the current political and financial climate. B&NES were particularly helpful and provided guidance for a potential model where a future partnership could be developed in line with the new approach to commissioning youth services.

A general observation was the lack of overall awareness of what the Young Ranger Scheme was about. Obviously as one of many programmes that the MHAOND unit run, it is unreasonable to expect people to know the details but one of the aims is to reach communities and there is potentially an opportunity not being capitalised on here.



Picture 2. The Young Rangers learning bush craft skills

Table 6. Summary of the responses from the partners and potential partners.

Organisation	Somerset WT	Avon WT	National Trist	Goblin Combe	Fernhill Farm	Natural England	Wells Museum	Active Mendip	Bristol Water	Somerset Levels & Moors	Mendip Society	Somerset Youth Rural Project	Bath & North East Council Children & Youth dept.	Somerset County Council Children and Young Dept
Question														
1. Are you aware of the MHAONB Junior Ranger Scheme?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	X	X
2. Do you contribute to the JR scheme in any way?	✓	?	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	X	✓	X	X	X
3. Do you know what the stated aims of the JRS are?	X	✓	X	✓	✓	X	X	X	X	X	✓	X	X	X
4. What partnership/support do you/your organisation provide to MHAONB	X	X	✓	✓	✓	-	X	X	?	X	X	X	X	X
5. Does your organisation run any similar type of activities or education/youth programmes?	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓
6. Would you/your organisation be prepared to give more support?	?	?	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	?	?	✓	✓	✓	✓?	✓?
7. Do you ever receive reports (written or verbal) on the JR scheme?	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	X	✓	X	X	X
8. Is there anyone or department/section who may have an interest in the JR scheme?	✓	?	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	X	X	✓	✓	-
9. Does your organisation run anything for young people 11-18 wrt education/conservation?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓	X	X	✓	-	✓
10. As a partner do you think that you should be better viewed as exemplars of good practice?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
11. What benefit to your staff/volunteers do you feel and partnership with the JR scheme brings?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
12. Would you be prepared to attend a workshop to explore the further development of the YRS?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	?

KEY	✓	positive or yes response	X	negative response
	-	no significant response	?	not sure/possibly or it depends

## 5.0 Funding Opportunities

In the current financial and political climate, it is probably true to say that this is perhaps not the best time to pursue funding from outside organisations, especially local and national government departments and agencies. Balanced against this are the needs to consider alternative sources of funding and resources to ensure the future of the scheme.

The Young Ranger Scheme is a very innovative scheme that engages with young people on environmental and cultural issues and as such it will have attractions to providers of grant funding within local, national and European bodies. Equally, many companies are recognising the benefits of supporting good initiatives through their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) commitments. Whatever approach will be made in the future there will be a requirement for more time required to pursue these funding sources and it may well be that a current or future partner may be better placed as a result of their legal status to pursue these. It is also interesting to note that while the key environmental policies of the new government appear on the DEFRA website there is also a warning on several of the funding initiatives stating that the priorities mentioned reflect those of the last government and not the current one. It is likely as a result of the change of government that schemes such as the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund may change.

We believe that to ensure the future of the scheme and have in place funding from 2011 onwards, an application should be made to the Heritage Lottery Fund either under the Young Roots or Your Heritage funding streams, in addition to exploring other sources of funding. As agreed with the client, detailed discussions will be held with the potential funding bodies after the facilitated workshops.

Table 7. Possible Sources of funding

Possible Source of Funding		Commentary/description of grant source	
Private sector		Potential for local or regionally based businesses to sponsor or contribute	
Heritage Lottery	Young Roots	£3k to £25k	Young Roots is a grant programme designed to engage young people aged 13-25 with their heritage. Young Roots projects stem directly from the interest and ideas of young people, who are supported by youth and heritage organisations to develop skills, build confidence, and connect with their local communities.
	Your Heritage	£3k to £50k	The Your Heritage programme offers grants between £3000 and £50,000 inclusive for projects that relate to the local, regional or national heritage of the UK. Applications that help people to learn about, look after and celebrate heritage in a fun and enjoyable way are welcomed.
	Heritage Grants	> £50k	Heritage Grants is the main grants programme offering grants of more than £50,000 for projects that relate to the national, regional or local heritage of the UK.
Awards for All		Awards for All England is a simple small grants scheme making awards of between £300 and £10,000. The Awards for All programme aims to help improve local communities and the lives of people most in need.	

	Somerset Levels and Moors LARC	Levels & Moors Local Action is a programme funded by the European Union to support the positive development of communities and businesses in specific rural areas through local action or community-led projects. Just skirts the Mendips.
	Biffawards	Biffawards looks to support site-based projects that protect and enhance biodiversity across the UK, particularly those concentrating on species and habitats that have been identified as a priority in Biodiversity Action Plans. The Mendip area falls within 25 miles of Biffa facility and could meet their eligibility criteria.
	Aggregate Levy Fund	Natural England's ALSF Grant Scheme aims to support projects that reduce the effects of aggregate extraction on local communities and the natural environment. They support projects which involve and deliver benefits for one or more of the following Landscape and Nature Conservation, Access and Informal Recreation, Health and Well-being, Education and Understanding and Evidence Gathering.
	EU Youth in Action	Youth in Action is the programme the European Union has set up for young people. It aims to inspire a sense of active European citizenship, solidarity and tolerance among young Europeans and to involve them in shaping the Union's future. It promotes mobility within and beyond the EU's borders, non-formal learning and intercultural dialogue, and encourages the inclusion of all young people, regardless of their educational, social and cultural background: Youth in Action is a Programme for all.
	Gannett Foundation <£50k	This is a newspaper group's charitable trust available to organisation within one of their papers catchment area (e.g. Somerset County Gazette). Projects need to take a creative approach to local community needs that will benefit a large number of people. The maximum grant is £50,000
	Youth Opportunity Funds	The overall aim of the Youth Opportunity and Youth Capital Funds is to improve the provision of positive activities for young people, by giving them the power to decide how this funding should be spent in their area. Applications are made by young people to a panel of other young people in the locality who make decisions on whether applications are appropriate and should receive funding. Funded activities must support the five Every Child Matters <sup>7</sup> outcomes, benefit the local community and offer good value for money.
	Esmee Fairburn Foundation	It is responsive to requests for support across the broad range of our interests, which are: the cultural life of the UK, education and learning, the natural environment and enabling disadvantaged people to participate more fully in society.
	Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation	CGF aim is to help enrich and connect the experiences of people in the UK and Ireland and secure lasting and beneficial change in their lives. They have a special interest in supporting those who are most disadvantaged. Themes in 2010 include cultural understanding, environment, innovation and fulfilling potential.
	Quartet Community Foundation	Supports small, community-based charities and voluntary groups in the West of England whose work benefits local people. They give grants to a broad range of causes and welcome applications from both new and established groups.
Local Charities	Lions	Local branches of international charities will support good local causes. Much will depend upon the local priorities and individuals involved.
	Soroptimists	
	Round Table	
	Rotary	
	Local Authorities	Various funding streams, 5 local councils contribute to Mendip Hills partnership. Major financial challenges but opportunities potentially through new ways of working and the needs to commission services.

<sup>7</sup> Every Child Matters is a shared programme of change to improve outcomes for all children and young people. It takes forward the Government's vision of radical reform for children, young people and families.

## 6.0 Organisational Structures

The Mendip Hills AONB unit is hosted by Somerset County Council. It provides the service and coordination to deliver the agreed management plan for the Mendip Hills AONB Partnership Board. It is supported by an officers group drawn from the different partner bodies. It has therefore significant experience of working with partner bodies to deliver on the outputs of the current management plan. For some of the potential sources of external funding the AONB unit may not be the ideal applicant for some of the grant scheme. One or more of the bodies interested with working with the AONB unit in developing the Young Ranger Scheme may be better placed, due to their legal status, to apply to the granting bodies.

One of the early options considered by the AONB manager was the establishment of a charitable body to take on the organisation and running of the scheme. In view of the need to speedily progress with securing a financially viable future for the Young Rangers Scheme, we would recommend that it looks to formalise an agreement with partner bodies over what the new scheme will be, rather than at this stage spending time debating what legal structure should be set up. It may well prove advantageous in the future to agree the establishment of an unincorporated association rather than a new body.

At this stage, it is our view that energies and time could be wasted discussing the pros and cons of different organisational structures rather than agreeing how the scheme could be developed, structured and funded. Therefore at this time we suggest that seeking a separate entity to run and develop the YRS would be counterproductive and impede progress. The caveat to this is that at the facilitated workshops it is important that agreement is reached by all partners as to what they will bring to the partnership and what specific actions they will undertake as part of their contribution to developing the YRS.

The following table summarises different organisational structures that will be useful in pursuing this matter further.

Table 8. Organisational structures and a summary of their governance arrangements

Structure	What is it?	How do they operate?	Observation
MHAONB unit	Existing officer support to partnership committee	Implement work programmes to deliver the AONB Management Plan often in partnership with others. Are part of Somerset Council as the host authority	An existing partnership but its legal entity may restrict accessing the range of grants available
Unincorporated association/ partnership	The unincorporated association form is usually chosen when a number of individuals agree or 'contract' to come together for a common purpose - which may be of a social nature	Unincorporated associations are relatively straightforward to run and cost nothing to set up. They make their own rules for running the organisation and set these down in a democratic constitution. A management committee is elected to run the organisation on behalf of the members.	Easy to set up, providing a clear remit is agreed and partners agree their input, responsibilities and who will take the lead on the different activities and tasks.
Trust	A trust is a legal device which governs how assets given by an individual or organisation are to be used. Many organisations,	Trusts are unincorporated bodies and do not distribute their profits. They're managed by trustees. Trustees do not benefit from the trust, but act on behalf of the community for whose benefit it	Can access many potential grants. Several partners already have this status.

	such as those involved in education, healthcare, providing advice and conservation, can be structured as trusts.	is set up. Trusts make their own governing rules and have no legal identity of their own	
Limited Company	The limited company is an organisational structure which gives limited liability to its members. Some social enterprises take on the form of a limited company. This is a more accountable form than, for example, an unincorporated association.	Limited companies may have an 'objects' clause that sets out the company's aims or purposes. Although these objects can be commercial, if your business is a social enterprise, they may relate to social and/or environmental objectives such as regenerating an area or providing employment and/or training for people disadvantaged in the labour market. Social enterprises that are registered charities must only have objects that the law defines as charitable, such as relieving financial hardship or promoting education.	Most frequently adopted corporate legal structure; can be adapted to suit most purposes. A new entity and would require considerable work and support for the scale of the scheme.
Community benefit society	Community benefit societies (BenComs) are incorporated industrial and provident societies (IPS) that conduct business for the benefit of their community. Profits are not distributed among members, or external shareholders, but returned to the community. For example, a nursery school might use this form to let staff take part in decision-making	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. They are set up with social objectives to conduct a business or trade.</li> <li>2. They are run and managed by their members.</li> <li>3. They must submit annual accounts.</li> <li>4. They can raise funds by issuing shares to the public.</li> <li>5. They can be established as charities, providing they have exclusively charitable objects that are for the public benefit, allowing them to raise capital through public grants and charitable trusts. If approved, they're known as exempt charities - reporting to the Financial Services Authority (FSA), not the Charity Commission.</li> </ol>	'Off-the-peg' limited company structure for social enterprise with secure 'asset lock' and focus on community benefit. Would require management structure.
Community Interest Company	Community Interest Companies (CICs) are limited companies that exist to provide benefits to a community, or a specific section of a community. The CIC has the flexibility of the familiar company form, and access to a range of financing options, so may be appropriate for those working for a social purpose.	To register as a CIC, you must also register as either a company limited by shares or a company limited by guarantee. CICs are subject to dual regulations by both the CIC Regulator and Companies House. When registering your company with Companies House, you will need to provide additional documents, including a community interest statement describing your social purpose. The CIC Regulator will approve your application if your statement passes the community interest test.	For bona fide co-operatives that serves members' interests by trading with them or otherwise supplying them with goods or services. Possibly not the most appropriate structure to deliver the scheme.
Charitable incorporated organisation	First ready-made corporate structure specifically designed for charities. Similar to company but with different terminology	CIOs do not use company terminology - directors will be called charity trustees - they are like company forms. Separate legal entity.	Benefit wider community other than just own members and have special reason not to be companies.

## 7.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 For a small staff unit with a diverse range of responsibilities and functions to deliver on, the team has developed a first class young ranger scheme. In the absence of external funding they have been able to run the scheme to meet its original aspirations and aims, which are as relevant today as they were in 2005. They have also successfully followed the Europarc guiding principles and essential requirements of running a Young/Junior ranger scheme. The range of activities offered allow the participants to gain much from the scheme, including the opportunity to be outdoors, achieving several awards in life skills and the activities generally proved fun and enjoyable to the young people. The other Junior/Young Ranger schemes reviewed all had the benefit of external funding<sup>8</sup> at some stage to support them and as a result have been able to deploy additional resources and develop additional services that the Mendip Hills are not able to do. This includes the appointment of a dedicated officer responsible to plan and implement the scheme along with administrative. In our review of the different programmes/schemes the best example of excellence has come from the Mendip Hills. We have been impressed by the way that the scheme supports the progression of the young rangers through to volunteer rangers. No other scheme had such an approach in place and the AONB manager and staff are to be applauded for this innovative approach.



Photo 3. Surviving in the outdoors, Shelter building.

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<sup>8</sup> The Cairngorms National Park are offering this year a follow up scheme for those who participated last year with a view to encouraging the participants to become volunteer rangers.

## 7.2 Conclusions

### The Mendip Hills Young Ranger Scheme: Conclusions

- 1 The Young Rangers Scheme is well planned, organised and delivers on; its stated aims<sup>9</sup>, the relevant AONB management objectives and meets the guiding principles and the essential components of the Europarc Junior Ranger programme.
- 2 The activities are wide ranging and found in most cases to be enjoyed by all the participants.
- 3 There has been a change in the personnel running the current scheme and last year additional external resources were required to keep the scheme running due to staff changes.
- 4 St Hugh's is a useful local base close to the AONB office but as a working church there are limitations to its use as a base for outdoor activities.
- 5 The evaluations of the activities could be improved, including a slight modification on the current process to ensure that all participants fill in the monitoring forms. Although monitoring information is available on the earlier two schemes we saw no evidence to suggest that the feedback from the participants was acted on. This undoubtedly due to the gap in personnel running the scheme in 2009.
- 6 The participants have an opportunity to discuss the programme for the second year; it is not clear what changes are made as a result of this.
- 7 Participants receive several awards linked to the life skills that they are taught.
- 8 Parents are very appreciative of the scheme, its successes and cost.
- 9 The preferred day for running activities is a Saturday. During summer several participants and parents would like to have activities twice a month.
- 10 The programme allows for progression to the Advanced Ranger Scheme and at the age of 18, participants can sign up as Volunteer Rangers. Some of the current Volunteer Rangers have come through the programme.
- 11 As a result of the scheme several of the participants would like a career in conservation/countryside management.
- 12 The AONB unit put significant effort into communications through monthly e-mail updates, a monthly page in the local paper, press releases and regular reports to the partnership committee. The partner bodies are full of praise for the scheme however they appear to know little about what it does. This is an area requiring more consideration with a review of their communications strategy.
- 13 Participants are recruited through local schools in the immediate vicinity of the Mendip Hills. In the current intake it was left to the teaching staff to bring the scheme to the attention of their pupils. This could be improved by closer contact with senior staff at each of the target schools.
- 14 The selection criteria for participants is a simple straightforward process. It is dependant on the schools promoting the scheme to their students.
- 15 One member of staff is principally responsible for the running of the scheme supported by other staff members of the AONB unit and volunteers.
- 16 Parents are prepared to contribute more in terms of support and funding<sup>10</sup>.
- 17 The cost of the current scheme<sup>11</sup>, including the Advanced Young Rangers is just under £10,000 per year. This equates to £430 per Young Ranger. This compares very well with the schemes run in the Cairngorms (£1,500) and the Peak District (£1,666).
- 18 Of the sixteen attributes of good/exemplar practice identified from other schemes this scheme meets 5 of them.
- 19 Opportunities to promote the scheme, its successes and achievements could be improved, in particular with schools and in the local community.
- 20 The scheme affords opportunities for young people from all backgrounds.

<sup>9</sup> There is an issue with it as to it reaching into the wider local communities

<sup>10</sup> There are caveats to this

<sup>11</sup> Based upon the figures for 2010

## Recommendations

Recommendation 1: That the AONB Unit organise a series of press and media opportunities to promote the success of the current scheme.

The scheme is very successful and the Mendip Hills AONB should look to appropriate opportunities to highlight its successful attributes. To coincide with the Europarc Junior Ranger camp there will be several good opportunities to interest the press and media to raise the profile of the AONB and its diverse work.

Recommendation 2: That in the future development of the YRS, the staff unit and partners work closely with other providers to maximise on the opportunities afforded.

The delivery of Youth Services in England have changed significantly in the last few years and are continuing to change with a move to the commissioning of services for young people. This approach embraces a multi disciplined, multi partnership approach linked to “*Every Child Matters*”<sup>12</sup> programme. This programme was introduced by the last government but has changed the way that services are now delivered against the stated aims that every child up to the age of 19 will; be healthy; stay safe; enjoy and achieve; make a positive contribution and achieve economic well being.

In discussions with the local Authorities, it is unlikely that this approach will change radically in the next few years. This approach should be viewed positively as the many potential partners are very keen to work with and support the AONB unit to develop a new approach for running the scheme. The willingness of the partners is there, what is needed is a suitable vehicle for exploring how the Young ranger Scheme could be developed further to minimise the costs to the AONB unit but maximise on the skills , knowledge and expertise of the different organisations to maintain the quality experience currently offered. We would recommend that the facilitated workshops are organised as soon as possible to build upon this review.

Recommendation 3: That the AONB staff unit remain responsible for the management/co-ordination of any future scheme(s) to meet the guiding principals and essential requirements of the Europarc Federation Junior Ranger Scheme.

The initiative has been conceived within one of the very special places in England that enjoys recognition as a protected landscape. Across Europe, the Europarc Federation provides support and guidance in the running of these schemes and it is our view that this important recognition should not be lost and that in any future scheme or evolution of the current scheme, it should continue to follow the guiding principals and essential requirements of the Junior Ranger schemes and the AONB staff unit is responsible for ensuring that these quality standards are maintained.

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<sup>12</sup> Every Child Matters is a shared programme of change to improve outcomes for all children and young people.

Recommendation 4: That the 16 attributes of good and or excellent practice form part of the framework for developing the Young Rangers Scheme.

In the review of other Junior/Youth Ranger Schemes, 16 attributes of best practice have been identified. In the planning of future schemes these attributes should be integrated into the planning framework.

Recommendation 5: That both Young and Advanced Young rangers are involved in the development and planning of future schemes.

An important aspect in the development of services for young people is their active engagement in the process. The staff team have used an evaluation and feedback form for each activity undertaken. In the future development of the scheme it will be important for the young people to be actively involved in the planning and development of the Young Ranger Scheme. We would recommend that this should include both the Young Rangers and the Advanced Young Rangers to maximise on their experiences.

Recommendation 6: That a communication strategy is developed to support the aims and objectives of the scheme.

Several of the schemes reviewed elsewhere (Peak District, Northumberland Coast and the Cairngorms) highlighted the benefits of pro actively promoting them to schools and youth groups. A direct approach to senior school staff was seen as a major factor in the success of these schemes. It also had the benefit of developing good working relationships with other organisations in and around the area. Parallel with this was the benefits in maximising the use of effective communication media for scheme participants and others interested in the scheme. A concise and clear communication strategy should be developed to meet the needs of the organisers, participants and other interested parties.

Recommendation 7: That to ensure the successful development of the Young Ranger Scheme, any funding application should include proposals for running costs and some form of staff support.

The success of any funding application will depend upon the proposals matching the criteria laid down by the grant making body and partly the history of successful applications to that body from the applicant. It has to be stressed that most grant bodies will not fund an existing service provision, therefore there will need to be some changes to the existing scheme to qualify.

A key factor in the more successful schemes was the appointment of a dedicated officer to co-ordinate and manage the day to day operations of the YRS. This was either a change of role for an existing officer or the appointment of a new post. These were normally part time appointments of two/three days per week supported by some admin and clerical support. Such posts are supported in the Heritage Lottery Programmes. It may also be that elements of future programmes could be funded from different sources of funding by the partners and there will be a need for one person to coordinate these.

**Recommendation 8:** That the main focus for the AONB staff unit and partners would be to agree the detail of the new scheme rather than spend time discusses structures.

One early option considered by the AONB staff unit was the establishment of some form of charitable enterprise to run the YRS. We have thought long and hard about this and would suggest that it is too early to decide to set up a separate entity before any detail of the future YRS has been discussed and agreed. We have provided a matrix of possible governance structures, providing an observation on each. From the partners who could potentially be involved in any future project, several enjoy charitable status. To set up a new entity without any funding or detail would in our view be premature. It may well be that one or several of the partners would be better placed to apply to the different granting bodies. We would recommend that a decision is deferred until agreement is reached on the details of any new proposal.

**Recommendations 9:** That the Young Ranger Scheme is extended to communities outside the immediate environment of the Mendip Hills.

We have explored the potential of developing extending the YRS to participants outside the immediate environment of the Mendip Hills. There has been positive feedback particularly from Bath and North East Somerset Council. Disappointingly, there has been no response from Bristol Council and North Somerset Council. Much will depend upon the final model for the YRS. Issues of transport and accessibility of locations and frequency of meeting will need to be explored further. In the Northumberland Coast AONB they offer travelling expenses to the participants to remove such barriers.

**Recommendation 10:** To build upon their commitment to develop the skills of young people the AONB unit and partners should explore the potential of looking to introduce vocational or ILM/BTEC qualifications and or an apprenticeship scheme for the Advanced Young Rangers.

Throughout this review we have been impressed by the way that the scheme supports the progression of the youth rangers through to volunteer rangers. This separates the scheme from the others reviewed and is probably the best example of excellence that has come out from the review. Recognising the investment made by the AONB, we feel that there could be an argument to look at either some form of qualifications for the Advanced Youth Rangers such as the ILM/BTEC awards or explore the possibility of an apprenticeship scheme.

Recommendation 11: That the AONB unit organises the facilitated workshops as soon as possible with their current and potential future partners to explore ways to build upon and develop the current YRS.

While it would be desirable to retain the current successful format, unfortunately due to the current financial climate and political environment, this is not an option for the AONB unit. With councils being faced with 25 to 40% cuts, the unit manager is fully justified in implementing the current review of the Young Ranger Scheme to explore other models for running this successful programme and seeking new sources of funding outside their core budget and delivery models.

From the review and discussions with existing and potential partners, there is a great willingness to work with the staff unit to develop the Young Ranger Scheme from the public, private and NGO sectors. There will be a need to ensure that all parties who agree to work with the AONB

**Observation;** The AONB unit maximises on the opportunities with their partners to incorporate the vision for the Mendips into any organised activity run by their partners.

Finally, although not part of our remit, we note that at the moment the AONB staff unit do not run an education programme. In discussions with some of the partners, we have learned that school visits are organised to the area. We believe that there is an opportunity through more effective joined up working to encourage the deliverers of these visits to incorporate the vision for the Mendips into these visits to broaden the understanding and awareness of the areas special qualities.

## 8.0 Consultees

Name	Organisation	Role	
Michele	Bowe	Somerset Wildlife Trust	Living Landscape Officer
Mark	Courtier	National Trust	Area Manager
Dave	Tranter	Mendip Hills AONB	Volunteer
Andy	Tandy	Goblin Combe	Director
Dominie	Dumbrook	Somerset Levels and Moors LARC	Scheme Manager
Andrew	Wear	Fernhill Farm	Owner
Judith	Tranter	Mendips Society	Member
Heather	Black	Somerset Youth Rural Project	Chief Executive
Alex	Sherman	Somerset Youth Rural Project	Business Director
Barry	Lane	Wells Museum	Museum Curator
Julian	Sayer	Active Mendip	Director
Janice	Gardiner	Avon Wildlife Trust	Living Landscapes Project Manager
Dot	Isgrove	Natural England	Communities Advisor
Richard	Partington	Natural England	Senior Specialist Advisor
		Bath and North East Somerset Council, Education and Learning Department	Internal Consultant
Steve	Andrews	Somerset County Council, Youth Service Section	Area Team Leader
Mark	Holden	Bristol Water	Environmental Manager
Patric	Bulmer	Bristol Water	Director of Corporate Affairs
Jeremy	Williams	Peak District National Park	Youth Rangers Project Manager
Sally	Kempson	Northumberland Coast AONB	Access & Recreation Officer
Iain	Robson	Maldon DC Junior Rangers	Junior Ranger Service Co-ordinator
Louise	Flavell	Europarc Atlantic Isles	Development Officer
Dan	Bloomfield	East Devon DC	Education Ranger
James	Chubb	Cairngorms National Park	John Muir Award Manager
Alan	Smith	Europarc Federation	Policy Officer
Federico	Minozzi		Parent
Hazel	Baber		Parent
Linda	Milverton		Parent
Lynne	Lorraine-Francis		Parent
Catherine	Hunt		Parent
Andy	Fox	Mendip Hills	Volunteer Ranger
Laura	Blanchard	Mendip Hills	Volunteer Ranger
Alex		Mendip Hills	Advanced Young Ranger
John		Mendip Hills	Advanced Young Ranger
Katie		Mendip Hills	Advanced Young Ranger
		Mendip Hills	Volunteer Admin Officer for Young Ranger Scheme
Kate	Vantreen		Project Officer
Andrew	Mallender	MHAONB	AONB Manager
Sarah	Jackson	MHAONB	
The 9	Young Rangers	MHAONB	

## NOTES