

Environments for All Annual Review

2001-2002



by Black Environment Network – February 2002



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Main cover picture: Alan Atkinson. Insets, l-r: Padraic Murphy; Graham Burns; Andrew Harradine; Jane Alexander; Cath Crowley; Ian Legard and Jack Harper.

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Foreword

BTCV supports over 130,000 volunteers and 2000 communities each year to improve the rural and urban environment. We help to address social exclusion, health, regeneration, training and development needs as well as traditional conservation. BTCV has aspired to expand the boundaries of conservation to fully include disadvantaged communities, especially low income, minority ethnic, and disabled groups and individuals. BTCV recognised that it would have to focus resources in order to achieve its aims and the UK-wide Environments for All project, funded by the Community Fund, provided a major impetus.

A "Baseline Review" was published in 2002, which highlighted that BTCV, using the environment as a focus of work and experience, has become much more involved with the training of unemployed and disadvantaged people. But within BTCV and the environmental sector, there remained a weakness in widening participation for disadvantaged communities. The Baseline Review emphasised that where the needs of disadvantaged communities are placed first, a range of apparently non-environmental needs can also be met through environmental action.

From May 2001 until September 2002 the project had benefited nearly 12,000 people directly with a further 60,000 benefiting indirectly. The project, which has bases in Glasgow, The Amman Valley and Wrexham in Wales, in Northern Ireland and in Oldham, Leicester, Brent and Smallheath in Birmingham has helped to dispel the myths surrounding the involvement of people on lower incomes and ethnic minorities in environmental action. In Northern Ireland we are working with travellers and the Chinese community, in Glasgow with asylum seekers and the Asian community. In England the focus is on black and minority ethnic communities whilst in Wales it is on people with low incomes, and Welsh speakers.

This wonderful diversity of individuals and communities has helped to create a rounded profile of 20% White British, 24% Asian British, 30% White Irish, 7% Black British, 5% Chinese and 13% other minority ethnic, especially asylum seekers.

The work is risky and has created debate within BTCV about its value and place in a conservation organisation. This has been offset by the truly stunning work that volunteers have undertaken throughout the UK to disprove a perceived lack of interest in environmental

issues. BTCV's philosophy of being welcome to all, to have fun and to carry out practical work is at the very heart of the organisation's ability to break out of its perceived enclave without huge amounts of debate.

In comparison with the findings of the Baseline Review, BTCV has performed excellently. A random statistical sample of over 32,000 people based on the original sample highlights that 50% were unemployed, 20% were from the Black and Minority Ethnic Community and over 10% disabled.

There is still a lot to do and the current funding only runs until May 2004 but BTCV is already taking steps to disseminate the lessons learnt and the good practice developed. Internally BTCV is training staff and holding events to highlight the Environments for All initiative. Externally the Baseline Review, this first Annual Review and a range of DVDs and videos produced in Scotland are being used to draw the attention of the government and the environmental sector to the work that is being undertaken. BTCV is also working with partners and the communities themselves and complementing a number of other organisations who are also beginning to dispel myths and break down barriers.

A national conference is scheduled for 2004 and BTCV is continuing to work with the Black Environmental Network and others to illustrate how, with the right values, a clear focus and the allocation of resources, huge gains can be made for all involved.

BTCV is adamant that this initiative is not going to disappear as a result of limited funding. Longer term funding is being sought to ensure that this new and vibrant profile of people that we work with has the opportunity to influence the democratic structures of BTCV and change the organisation irrevocably.

BTCV is delighted with the progress to date and we recognise that having a much broader constituency will bring with it a range of new challenges and opportunities. However we will stay true to our belief and continue to ensure that everybody should be given the opportunity to take practical action to benefit the environment.

Richard Williams
BTCV Group Development Director
January 2003

1. Introduction

This first Annual Review of BTCV's Environments for All project looks at progress made by the organisation in its work with disadvantaged communities and black and minority ethnic groups, as well as travellers and refugees across the UK. This review will inform BTCV's decision making regarding the Environments for All project and has relevance for other environmental organisations working with disadvantaged communities across the UK.

The review focuses very much on the qualitative outcomes and outputs of the Environments for All project and is

grounded in the Baseline Review of BTCV's work with disadvantaged communities. This report therefore assesses whether Environments for All has made a difference, what has been successful, what has proved to be a challenge and other emerging issues.

In order to show the richness and diversity of the Environments for All project, quantitative analysis of the outputs and outcomes will be represented graphically against the targets set by BTCV in the original Environments for All grant bid. See Appendix 2.

2. Objectives and key targets

The Environments for All project set the following three key objectives:

- 1 To increase the involvement of disadvantaged people, especially the black and minority ethnic community, in practical environmental action
- 2 To disseminate information and good practice in order to widen participation within BTCV and across the environment sector
- 3 To make BTCV more representative in terms of staff and volunteer profiles, project delivery and the way the organisation is developed and run.

The following quantitative targets were set to effectively monitor and evaluate the success of the project during its first year:

- To involve 6,400 individuals actively in consultation and direct environmental practical action
- To benefit 3,500 people through the use of the practical environmental project outcomes
- To benefit 5,530 organisations and community groups (over three years).

3. Baseline Review of BTCV's work with disadvantaged communities

The findings of the Baseline Review of BTCV's work with disadvantaged communities show that such work requires innovation, commitment, responsiveness and resources, and has great impact on the communities involved and BTCV staff.

The Baseline Review identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to BTCV's work with disadvantaged communities, which this annual review addresses. It also identified key examples of good practice in terms of communication of new ideas, ownership and sustainability of projects, and practicalities of work with disadvantaged groups.

Baseline review summary

The Baseline Review summary found that communities involved in work with BTCV need more ownership of projects and although BTCV is successful in working with disadvantaged groups, the organisation is less so in working effectively with black and minority ethnic communities. Also, information about work with disadvantaged groups is not being co-ordinated and disseminated effectively within BTCV and its networks.

The funding of projects is also a major consideration for BTCV staff, and the commitment of resources for working with disadvantaged groups has financial implications for them.

4. The Environments for All project

The Environments for All project has delivered effectively on various fronts after its first year; however, there are challenges and a few gaps which need addressing.

Using questionnaires and one-to-one discussions with BTCV staff and beneficiaries of the project, the following qualitative outputs and outcomes, including challenges and gaps, have been identified at the end of the first year.

Monitoring and Evaluation

BASELINE REVIEW

A Baseline Review of BTCV's work with disadvantaged communities has been carried out and a report has been produced which is currently being made widely available within BTCV and its networks. The report highlights good practice and verifies BTCV's statistical information regarding work with disadvantaged communities and within the broader sectoral context.

REVIEW PROCEDURES

This report forms part of the review procedures put in place to monitor the Environments for All work programme.

CHALLENGES

The main challenge for BTCV is to incorporate the findings and issues raised in the baseline and subsequent reviews into its organisational strategy.

GAPS

Use of soft qualitative indicators in project evaluation and monitoring and their approval by funders is an issue for project staff when working with disadvantaged communities.

Recruitment and Training

All project staff have been recruited and project teams are in place. The ethnic diversity of the Environments for All staff and their skills in community development and environmental participation reflect the target groups who are working in partnership within the project.

Staff have undertaken relevant training, and opportunities for further training exist in areas of need.

CHALLENGES

The Environments for All staff have community development and environmental skills which are currently in demand within the sector, and BTCV has to identify ways of retaining such skilled staff in the organisation.

Managing a widely distributed team of staff can also present a challenge.

GAPS

Capacity building of "new audiences" for BTCV takes time and has demonstrated a need for administrative support for the project teams.

Project Management

Regional project teams have been established in liaison with BTCV UK and Country Directorship teams.

A project steering group is already in place and includes representatives who understand the needs and issues of concern of disadvantaged groups.

12-Month Operational review

The project team is made up of members of Environments for All staff representing the four countries and the centre.

A Project Steering Committee is already in place and includes representatives who understand the need and issues of concern to disadvantaged groups.

CHALLENGES

The Environments for All staff who assist in the project team have variable and limited administrative support.

The Environments for All Project Steering Committee is only just beginning to receive enough valid information to inform their meetings.

Communication within the various teams is effective but broadcasting the lessons learnt is difficult due to the size and complexity of BTCV's operational structures.

GAPS

As the operators on the ground provide more information, the advice and policy guidance is more relevant and accurate.

The limited resources available to manage and co-ordinate the programme restrict what can be achieved in the short term.

BTCV needs to assess how to increase diversity in its policy governance and take action to develop it.

Project Delivery

INCREASING THE INVOLVEMENT OF DISADVANTAGED PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC COMMUNITIES IN PRACTICAL ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

The Environments for All project is proactive, inclusive, interactive and responsive to community needs and aspirations. The volunteers are also the beneficiaries, and the project's flexibility is helping to build relationships and partnerships with black and minority ethnic communities. This is leading to a range of practical environmental action which addresses the communities' social concerns and cultural needs.

The project has made a difference to the involvement of disadvantaged groups, especially those from a black and minority ethnic background, by breaking down institutional barriers through its flexible approach. It is beginning to raise the profile of BTCV and the environment sector among disadvantaged groups and more especially among black and minority ethnic groups.

Community projects being delivered through Environments for All are responsive to community needs, helping people to make decisions for themselves and to have ownership of the projects. Individuals are benefiting by developing skills, for example the ability to participate in consultation, that they would otherwise not be able to develop in a formal setting.

Individuals and communities are venturing into new areas of life opportunities through their involvement in Environments for All.

Case study: A Chinese Women's group at Meridian in Glasgow has progressed from Arts and Crafts classes to doing outdoor activities such as woodland guided walks and beach clean-ups, and the members have also become involved in BTCV Scotland's training courses.

CHALLENGES

The project will need to be sustained beyond three years. It is developing innovative areas of work with under-represented and deprived communities, but needs a maximum number of projects to allow communities to sustain their involvement in practical environmental action and to encourage the development of organisational cultural change which underpins such a new direction of work.

Another major issue is that all BTCV staff need to recognise that Environments for All is a long term project and that its findings should inform the overall organisational strategies.

Staff location can be a barrier for volunteers in target groups if they are far removed from the local community.

BTCV needs to focus on attracting communities who have never heard of BTCV or who never get involved with the organisation.

GAPS

Black and minority ethnic role models within BTCV and the environment sector in general need to be nurtured and used to inspire the community, particularly the younger age group.

Other projects within BTCV should start to develop their own initiative to reach out and work more effectively with black and minority ethnic groups. Environments for All should not be seen as the only entry point for these groups into BTCV and environmental conservation work.

Statistical analysis

18 Members of BTCV staff were involved in responding to the questionnaire and in one-to-one telephone discussions, resulting in the following:

Strongly Agree/Agree responses from BTCV staff	(%)
The project has made a difference to the involvement of disadvantaged groups in BTCV	91
There have been good outcomes from the project	100
There have been challenges for the project	91
There are key lessons to be learned from the project	92
The project has encouraged communities to consider taking part in traditional BTCV work	80
Five groups benefiting from the project responded to the questionnaire and took part in one-to-one telephone discussions. The findings are summarised below:	
Strongly Agree/Agree responses from group members	%
Our group feels confident in working with BTCV	100
There have been good outcomes from the project	100
There have been challenges for the project	85
Our group would have been involved in environmental practical action without the project	60
Our group aim to continue to be involved when Environments for All finishes	90

Summary of comments about Environments for All from BTCV staff and Project beneficiaries

Statistical analysis of the responses from BTCV staff and the project beneficiaries regarding the quality of the project's outputs and outcomes shows a similar trend in the way in which both parties felt about the project in general, after the first year in operation.

With regards to BTCV staff, 91% either strongly agree or agree that Environments for All has made a difference to the involvement of disadvantaged groups in BTCV. The reasons included:

"The Environments for All project differs substantially from traditional BTCV work because it is more pro-active, inclusive, interactive and responsive to community needs and aspirations"

"The project has been successful using methods which some people would not class as 'environmental' but this is how we have managed to engage and build up a relationship with client groups"

"We are responding to community needs and volunteers are also the beneficiaries"

"Resources are focused on target groups more effectively"

Of the staff respondents, 72% strongly agreed that there have been good outcomes from the Environments for All project, with the remaining 28% agreeing. Staff quotes included:

"Building of partnerships and relationships for future work"

"Empowering people to make a difference to their communities and release their potential"

"Staff have freedom to act on their instincts and be innovative"

"Environments for All has brought staff and volunteers into BTCV that would otherwise probably have never had anything to do with the organisation. BTCV is broadening its profile"

"It has revealed a hidden element of the population that is rich in culture, enthusiasm and strong family and community values that benefit the general population"

55% of respondents also strongly agree that there are challenges facing the Environments for All project, notably a lack of administrative support and means of challenging the perceptions of the project held by other BTCV staff.

92% of staff strongly agree or agree that there are key lessons emerging from the project, for example:

"Contrary to the popular perception, ethnic minority community groups are very interested in environmental projects and sustainability issues"

80% of staff thought the project is encouraging ethnic minorities to be involved in traditional BTCV work, with the remaining 22% not so sure at present.

100% of project beneficiaries who responded to the questionnaire strongly agreed that Environments for All has given them confidence in working with BTCV. For example one respondent said, *"Every single thing that BTCV said they will do has been done, and with great enthusiasm"*

In parallel with BTCV staff 100% of beneficiary respondents felt the projects they were involved in have had good outcomes.

It is also worth noting that the success of Environments for All has not come about without challenges. In contrast with BTCV staff (55%), 85% of beneficiary respondents strongly agree or agree that there have been challenges for them in becoming involved in the project. This highlights the fact that, despite these challenges, those not used to participating in practical environmental action show great commitment when given the appropriate opportunities.

One group responded, *"The challenge for Environments for All has been getting local people involved with the project, rather than people from outside doing everything. This is now starting to happen."*

Finally 60% of beneficiary respondents felt they would never have been involved in practical environmental action without Environments for All. Of the remaining 60%, the majority indicated that, without Environments for All, their involvement in practical environmental action would have been limited.

Sharing information and good practice

Within BTCV, internal dissemination of information about Environments for All has been excellent. Staff meetings, regional and UK-wide conferences are being used to share information regarding work with disadvantaged communities.

Within the environment sector, the Environments for All project is seen as a model of good practice among many organisations such as Groundwork Trusts, Plantlife, etc.

The website and helpline activities in Wales offer immense opportunities to groups and organisations in need of information, and provide support to Environments for All staff.

CHALLENGES

The project must be promoted actively to target beneficiaries within limited staff time. The best way to do this is through direct outreach, as this is the most effective way to get information to disadvantaged groups.

GAPS

There are no specific gaps identified regarding dissemination of information and good practice at the end of the first year of the project. However, questionnaire respondents felt that the level of promotion of the project and of BTCV in general among black and minority ethnic communities should be increased. Staff also felt that more publicity for Environments for All is needed.

Conclusion

The Environments for All project is a programme of action to deliver and extend environmental action opportunities in a co-ordinated way to black and minority ethnic communities across the UK. The first year of the project shows that securing such change may take time, but the key principles are that BTCV and the environment sector as a whole need to be more responsive and flexible enough to meet the needs of particular communities and groups. The first year of the project delivery has been excellent through the commitment, enthusiasm and hard work of all community groups, organisations and BTCV staff involved.

Appendix 1: Environments for All Questionnaire to BTCV Staff

Note: Please note that although you have been asked to score against various aspects of the EfA project, your comments on the aspects are very important in evaluating the quality of service that the EfA project is providing and in identifying further action for BTCV.

1. How different is the Environment for All project from traditional BTCV work and has it made a difference to the involvement of disadvantaged groups in BTCV's work?
2. What has been good about the Environment for All project?
3. What has been the main challenges for you in setting up and delivering the Environment for All project?
4. What other issues need to be considered by the EfA project?

5. What are the key lessons to be learnt from EfA and how should they be communicated effectively?
6. What are the most important elements in successfully working with disadvantaged communities?
7. If you have been able to use EfA project activities and events to encourage communities to consider or take part in traditional type BTCV work, explain how? If not explain why?

SCORING FORM (BTCV STAFF)

Please indicate by ticking the appropriate column, to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements, about the EfA project.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
EfA has made a difference to the involvement of disadvantaged groups in BTCV					
There has been good outcomes from the EfA project					
There have been challenges for the EfA project					
There are other key issues to be considered by the EfA project					
There are key lessons from the EfA project					
EfA has encouraged communities to consider taking part in traditional BTCV work					

Appendix 2: Environments for All Questionnaire to beneficiaries

Note: Please note that although you have been asked to score against various aspects of the Environment for All project, your comments on the aspects are very important in evaluating the quality of service that the EfA project is providing and in identifying further action for BTCV.

1. How did you get involved with BTCV's Environments for All project?
2. Does your group feel confident in working with BTCV and why?
3. How important to your group has BTCV's involvement been?
4. What has been good about BTCV's involvement?
5. What have been the challenges for your work with BTCV?
6. Would your group have got involved in environmental practical action without the BTCV Environments for All project?

7. What is being done or needs to be done to ensure that your group continues to be involved in environmental work after BTCV's involvement?
8. What is being done or needs to be done so that your group has a say in the Environment for All project (consultation)?
9. How would you like the working relationship with BTCV to continue?
10. What other issues need to be considered by BTCV in working with communities?

SCORING FORM (BENEFICIARIES)

Please indicate by ticking the appropriate column, to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements, about the EfA project.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Our group feel confident in working with BTCV					
There has been good outcomes from the EfA project					
There has been challenges for the EfA project					
Our group would have been involved in environmental practical action without the EfA project					
Our group can continue to be involved when EfA finishes					
Our group is involved in the control of EfA activities					
Our group has a say in the EfA project					
There are other issues to be considered by the EfA project					

Appendix 3: Analysis of BTCV's work with Black Minority Ethnic and Disadvantaged Communities UK 2001 and 2002 (SAMPLE SIZES IN BRACKETS 2001 - 2002)



BTCV Environments for All



BTCV Environments for All provides opportunities for people from marginalised, black and minority ethnic (BME) communities to get involved in looking after their local environment. It is a three year programme funded by the Community Fund with support from Barclays PLC. Currently, the environmental sector fails to adequately reflect the diversity of the UK's communities. Traditional environmental volunteering opportunities are often not appropriate or relevant to these audiences, for reasons varying from culture to poverty. BTCV Environments for All programme will tackle this by piloting and developing different approaches suited to each communities' local needs. The lessons learnt will then be shared across the organisation to help all levels of BTCV reflect Britain's richly diverse society and to establish best practice within the environmental sector as a whole.

As well as Environments for All, BTCV also offers:

- One-day conservation projects any day of the week
- BTCV Conservation Holidays
- Support for around 2,000 associated local groups and schools
- Community development work in the UK and overseas
- Courses and vocational training
- Training programmes for unemployed people

For more information about BTCV Environments for All or any of BTCV's activities, please contact:

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