

Chilterns Commons Network Bulletin Summer 2009

Who's Using Your Common?

Traditionally, commons have been used for a variety of reasons including fairs, markets, celebrations or as part of Commoners livelihoods. Today, the idea of using a common as a local community focal point is perhaps less clear unless it is known as a 'recreation and amenity area'.

Who will you find on your common this weekend? A few dog walkers or horse riders? Maybe the local conservation group doing some work or a family out for a stroll? Perhaps you will find nobody at all – a not unusual occurrence.

Many commons owners and managers have produced informative leaflets and interpretation panels for their sites to help visitors enjoy and understand them. So, why don't more people visit? There may be many reasons but two simple ones might well be that people **do not know that the common exists and do not know they can use it!** They may also not feel welcome.

Arguably the best way to encourage more people to visit and use the common is to organise an event which can be as simple or as elaborate as you want it to be depending upon your expertise at organisation. A known fact is that people are far more likely to revisit a site if they have been actively involved in something and have met the owners, managers or wardens face to face.

If you don't have experience in organising an event, it can all seem quite daunting but don't worry – help is at hand! As a starter, it's probably easiest to organise a simple guided walk for local families and below is a short checklist of essential questions:



- Who will lead the walk?
- Will it be themed? (e.g. history, wildlife etc.)
- Where will it go? (max. 2 hours, including stops is ideal for families)
- Where will people park?
- Will booking be necessary? (Useful to know how many to expect)
- Will there be a charge? (If so, how much?)
- Where should it be advertised and when?

Cathy Rose, Activities and Learning Officer, Chilterns Conservation Board