Report

“People and Historic Places”

Visit to Drumlanrig Castle by Edinburgh Chinese Elderly Support Association

The first national pilot project addressing access by the ethnic minorities to opportunities at historic houses

A Report by the Black Environment Network (BEN)
For the Historic Houses Association (HHA)
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**Acknowledgements and thank yous**
1. Executive Summary

The People and Historic Places project is a unique national project linking ethnic communities to historic houses. The pilot was undertaken as a partnership between the Historic Houses Association (HHA) and Black Environment Network (BEN).

1.1 Overall aim

“ To explore opportunities to increase access by ethnic community groups to historic houses”

1.2 The Project

The project was focused on the simplicity of an offer of a visit to a historic house to a range of ethnic community groups. Efforts were made to select ethnic minority participants to give a range of social group characteristics, age, gender, ethnicity and religion. Against this is a framework of preparation, training and evaluation. There is enormous goodwill within the Historic Houses Association. The news of this project prompted so much enthusiasm that many Historic Houses came forward to be involved. Some individual owners expressed their personal enthusiasm and desire to engage directly with the groups. A total of 8 houses were selected to take part, in order that the resources of the project would not be overburdened.

1.3 Key Outcomes and Conclusions

Overall the project was an overwhelming success:

- Every one of the ethnic community groups enjoyed the visits and would like to make further visits.
  If support can be found for a further programme of visits, it is estimated that we now have between 7 to 10 times the number of interested groups in the various locations we targeted. These would consist of return visitors bringing friends and other family members, plus new visitors stimulated to visit historic houses through word of mouth.

- Every one of the 8 historic houses now knows, through experience, that they can engage successfully with ethnic communities as a significant new audience.

- A visit that simply offers a guided tour of a historic house with the enjoyment of its gardens and grounds has sufficient interest for new visitors from ethnic communities.
• The sheer beauty of historic houses and their grounds are a revelation and experienced as a new form of social pastime. Many visitors felt that a single visit was not enough and expressed their wish to return simply to wander around and settle down to enjoy these surroundings.

• Many historic houses have activities and attractions which add to the experience. These provide a range of opportunities to engage the interest of the full age range.

• There is a significant potential for commercial returns for historic houses within reasonable distances from urban conurbations with high ethnic presence. There is a rising middle class within ethnic communities. Even with groups on low income, many ethnic community groups raise money for trips out as part of their programmes. Investing in first visits can lead to income as entry fees and the cost of activities would be covered by grants and other fundraising.

• Minor investment in training relevant personnel will address the unevenness of awareness, knowledge and skills in relation to providing a welcome for visitors from ethnic communities.

1.4 The socio-cultural significance of visits to historic houses

• The engagement of the owners of historic houses with ethnic communities has demonstrated how the usually assumed divisions of class and privilege can be overcome, and experiences can be exchanged which demonstrate common ground and generate goodwill. These positive experiences of generosity and welcome cannot be underestimated as a basis for the continuing relationship that enables the maximum benefit of access to heritage by ethnic communities.

• Many of the houses have historical links with the countries of origin of members of ethnic communities. Some have significant objects and features of cultural value.

• Members of ethnic communities, are disadvantaged and live in some of the worst environments within the inner cities. These visits to historic houses have been re-awakening their connection to nature and history. This is true both in what they have yet to share in and what they can already share, as their uprooting have often been in the context of historical events.
• Connecting to historic houses and participating in the activities enabled integration through simply being among members of the majority population. It is a setting within which a contribution to social cohesion can be made.

• Although it is early days one can see that volunteering at historic houses will contribute to breaking the mould of stereotyping, bringing into the big picture the reality of the possible vast contribution of ethnic communities to the care and protection of the historic environment.

1.5 Into the future

The expectations of both historic houses and ethnic community groups have been raised in the most positive way. The stage is set for us to build on this first pilot and move towards a more ambitious project.

However, the actions set out in the following recommendations, to be effective, require funding, expert advice and guidance. It is as yet unclear how precisely this will be provided. Until resolved, apart from the follow-on action identified for contacts already established, this report will remain inevitably aspirational.

Visit to Kelburn Castle - Muslim Women’s Resource Centre
visit by Pakistani women and children
August 2003
2. Introduction

2.1 Background to the project

The People and Historic Houses project is a pilot undertaken as a partnership between Black Environment Network (BEN) and Historic Houses Association (HHA). Work done by the Government’s Social Exclusion Unit shows that ethnic minority groups are disproportionately at risk of social exclusion. The DCMS People and Places Report and the First State of the Historic Environment Report (SHER 2002), identified the lack of participation by ethnic minorities in the UK in the historic environment as one of the main challenges facing the historic environment sector. BEN and HHA both sat on the SHER 2002 Steering Group and decided to begin to address this challenge, pulling together the relevant expertise and resources embodied within the two organisations. The idea for the first national pilot project to address access by ethnic minorities to historic houses was born. HHA provided funds for the project and drew on their experience and contacts with historic houses. As the pioneer organisation in ethnic involvement in the built and natural environment, BEN focused on the design of the methodology for the pilot and drew on its extensive network to identify appropriate participants from ethnic communities.

2.2 Project aim and objectives

2.2.1 Overall aim

“To explore opportunities to increase access by ethnic community groups to historic houses”

2.2.2 Objectives

- To test and develop initial methodology to involve ethnic minorities in accessing historic houses
- To lay down the basis for a programme of work to stimulate ethnic minorities to access what historic houses have to offer
- To engage ethnic minority groups in the development of methodology

Visit to Arley Hall - Wai Yin Chinese Women’s Society visit by group of Chinese men and women September 2003
2.2.3 The design of methodology to address the project aim and objectives

In relation to the involvement of ethnic minority participants, BEN and HHA decided to focus on the simplicity of the offer of a visit to a historic house. Against this was to be a framework of preparation, training and evaluation set in the context of the strengths of the 2 organisations BEN and HHA. The methodology piloted:

- Drew on the years of experience of BEN in reaching out and involving ethnic groups in a range of activities within the built and natural environment
- In particular it drew on methodology which BEN has tested out in the Mosaic Project, a partnership between BEN and CNP (Council for National Parks) which focuses on linking ethnic communities and National Parks

2.4 The Pilot Project methodology

2.4.1 Identification of participating historic houses and ethnic community groups

a. Identification of participating historic houses by HHA
   - enthusiasm and commitment
   - ability to participate in the pilot project
   - geographical spread
   - proximity to centres of ethnic minority conurbations
   - HHA’s knowledge of individual historic houses

b. Identification of participating ethnic minority community groups by BEN
   - ability of Community Group Workers to organise a safe trip into the countryside
   - understanding of the aims of the project and commitment to the project
   - ability and commitment to feedback and evaluation
   - interest in ongoing future development of visits to historic houses
   - geographical spread
   - the location of BEN Development Workers and their knowledge of local groups
   - social group characteristics, gender, age, religion, ethnicity

2.4.2 Establishment of a ‘baseline working partnership’ between participating historic houses and ethnic community groups

a. Initial awareness raising workshops run by BEN for participating historic houses to enable a minimal critical level of developing a relationship to ethnic minority groups in a culturally sensitive way. The basic awareness raising workshop covered the following themes:
   - To share information to lay down the basis for the HHA and BEN partnership
   - To enable a basic level of awareness re engaging with an ethnic minority group
   - To discuss the benefits of taking part and the way forward

b. A series of workshops/face to face meetings were held with all the ethnic community groups to brief them about:
   - the aims of the project
   - what is on offer at the houses
   - the possible benefits of their involvement
   - to address any initial areas of concern with regard to the project
c. A detailed preparatory visit to experience what the historic house has to offer, combined with a face to face meeting between representatives (owners and/or staff) of the historic house, BEN staff and BEN Development Workers and the Community Group Workers to:
• discuss ethnic participation in the built and natural environment
• issues of concern
• specific cultural needs
• plans for the visit
• agree a programme for the visit

2.4.3 Accompaniment, facilitation and support of the visits of ethnic community groups to historic houses by BEN Development Workers

2.4.4 Feedback from historic houses and ethnic community groups

2.4.5 Baseline information gathering of existing links and activities

2.4.6 Evaluation and report on the outcomes, including lessons learnt to inform future action

2.4.7 Event to share information and to map possible future directions

2.5 Notes to the Pilot Project methodology

These are the answers to the frequently asked questions in relation to the BEN approach to methodology for pilot projects in relation to engaging ethnic communities in areas of involvement which are completely new to them

2.5.1 Why has this project been done through the network of BEN development workers instead of using a single dedicated development worker?

It is neither practical nor feasible to deliver a quality project with limited resources and time through the appointment of a single dedicated worker who cannot possibly have an ongoing working relationship with the local ethnic minority communities spread across 3 countries - England, Scotland and Wales. The one year project involved the organisation and delivery of visits to 8 historic houses with participants from 5 cities over 7 months, followed by evaluation, dialogue, analysis and evaluation and completion of the report over 5 months. The pilot project capitalises on the generalised
commitment of ethnic community groups which have already worked with BEN and who are prepared to put work into something because they understand the role of BEN in undertaking projects for the long term benefit to ethnic communities.

2.5.2 What are the criteria used to identify and select ethnic community groups?

- interest in the pilot project and commitment to working in partnership to address involvement in a new area of work - visits to historic houses
- capacity to organise safe trips
- capacity to do the pioneering work of stimulating and engaging members of its community in first visits to historic houses
- capacity to take part in all of the processes of involvement, information gathering, dialogue and evaluation

2.5.3 Many of the BEN Development Workers belong to ethnic minorities. Why does BEN also employ Development Workers who are white?

The ability to work effectively with ethnic minorities is not unique to ethnic minorities. As long as workers are skilled and knowledgeable it does not matter what ethnic group they belong to. Additionally, it is important that BEN affirms this - BEN’s white Development Workers are role models for all white workers to aspire to working effectively with ethnic minorities.

2.5.4 Why has BEN not used an external evaluator in addition to the participatory evaluation methods used?

For pioneering work within a pilot project with very limited time and resources, it is crucial that the task of evaluation is participatory, informed by a dialogue in the context of parties which have established a working relationship, working closely and intensely together, and making the most of the limited time available within the resources of the project. Local knowledge of the social and cultural context, mutual trust, mutual commitment, the choice of participating ethnic community groups who can deliver high quality work at a community level - these have all contributed to the shape, quality and success of the project. The use of an external evaluator would have been experienced as intrusive. The learning and familiarisation with the local scene that an external party would need to deliver relevant interpretation and analysis is not possible within such a time and resource limited project.

2.6 Project participants

2.6.1 Proposed participants

- 5 historic houses across England, Scotland and Wales
- 5 ethnic community groups involving 100 participants

BEN and HHA initially planned to work with 5 Historic Houses and to involve 5 ethnic community groups, each with an average of 20 participants, from across the UK. We envisaged a pilot which involved 100 ethnic minority individuals across a range of geographical locations.
2.6.2 Final participants

- 8 historic houses across England, Scotland and Wales
- 8 ethnic community groups involving 250 participants

The news of this project prompted so much enthusiasm that many more historic houses came forward to be involved. We could have included more, but just 3 houses were added making a total of 8 houses (See Appendix 1) in order that the resources of the project will not be overburdened. The prospective number of ethnic minority individuals to be involved was therefore raised to 160 individuals. As the project progressed, word of mouth from the ethnic groups initially selected resulted in more ethnic minority groups coming forward asking to be included. We were able to identify resources to undertake more visits. At the end of the project, 250 individuals from diverse backgrounds have participated in the project. We could have included more groups, but again consideration was given to the fact that we should not overburden the project. Efforts were made to select ethnic minority participants to give a range of ages, gender, social contexts, ethnicity and religion. The intention is to provide diverse information. (See Appendix 2)
3. Awareness Raising Workshops and Pre-Visit Meetings

3.1 Awareness Raising Workshops

Awareness raising workshops were held in England, Scotland and Wales to:
• share information to lay down the basis for the HHA and BEN partnership
• enable a basic level of awareness re engaging with an ethnic community group
• discuss the benefits of taking part and the way forward

3.2 Summary Report - Awareness Raising Workshops

3.2.1 Aims

• To share information about HHA and BEN partnership
• To enable a basic level of awareness re engaging with ethnic community groups
• Discuss benefits of taking part
• Discuss the way forward

3.2.2 Identified possible benefits to Historic Houses

• Increase in visitor numbers
• Increase in diversity of visitors
• Reaching out to new audience
• Implementing government objectives
• Raise and improve profile of historic houses
• Fresh directions for interpretation
• New projects and new stories to tell
• Break down barriers
• Tap into new market
• Development of new activities which could increase visits from ethnic communities (plus possible spin-off in that activities suggested by ethnic groups may in fact be appealing to a variety of visitors)

3.2.3 What historic houses may be able to offer

• Guided tours
• Tailored tours
• Space for informal enjoyable activities - picnics, walks, games, fun and more formal activities - arts, sports and spiritual opportunities
• Garden talks and trails
• Sleepovers (tents, caravanning)
• Free access (not applicable to all historic houses)
• Focused development of familiarity
• Building links between ethnic community groups and historic houses
• Human history interest
• Safe environment
• Confidence building re travelling in UK and further a field
• Introduction to and contact with the natural environment / the countryside
• New knowledge (historic and natural environments)
• All weather venue (for rainy days etc) because there is interest indoors
• Special events e.g. outdoor theatre/ concerts which may appeal to ethnic groups
• Facilities, e.g. hire for conferences, weddings or food/ art/ cultural festivals
• Promotion of different aspects of culture to people who rarely come into contact with it
3.2.4 Identified possible benefits to ethnic communities

- Space
- Flexible opening times - within reason (it may be possible to take into account needs of families, work patterns etc) enabling particular groups to be able to visit
- The enjoyment of visiting beautiful gardens / woodland and other natural features and take interest in a diversity of plants
- Good wheelchair / pushchair access
- Guided tours with expert knowledge on hand providing opportunity for questions so that groups may get more out of the experience
- Ability to cater for large groups
- Opportunity for self- catering
- Social events e.g. picnic, barbecue
- Benefits to health (stress relief through contact with peaceful surroundings, stimulation for physical exercise: walking etc)
- Improving their own knowledge of the country, which they have made their home
- Sense of belonging from being welcomed
- Connection to and appreciation of local heritage

3.2.5 What ethnic communities may be able to offer historic houses

- Additional knowledge and ideas in relation to interpretation, e.g. cultural symbolism connection of plants, connections of buildings/features with different cultures
- Ethnic community groups are a preferred section of society when visiting in large groups as they have been found to have more appreciation and respect for sites
- Overseas audience (family connections)
- Local authority owned venues - enabling visits means that statutory requirements are fulfilled
- Spreading the word out to their communities - new patrons
- New types of visitors stimulate venues to re-evaluate their image and facilities to create a range of interest
- Community champions to historic houses - advice and consultation
- Support and enthusiasm for the historic environment

3.2.5 Looking to the future

- Set up a date for BEN staff, Community Group Workers and community representatives to visit the houses and draw up activity/activities for the day.
- Assess and engage with the cultural needs of the visiting ethnic community group with the support of the BEN Development Workers and Community Group Workers
- Visits to take place
- Feedback from all parties to be evaluated
- Pilot Project Report
- Consider whether there is the need, interest and support to develop a follow-up project
3.3 Meetings with the ethnic community groups

In order to ensure that the ethnic community groups understood what the project involved, and for them to make the best use of the pre-visit meeting at the historic houses, a series of workshops/face to face meetings were held by BEN Development Workers with each of the ethnic community groups to brief them about:
- the aims of the project
- what is on offer at the houses and thinking through how this may have particular meaning and potential for the particular ethnic minorities to be involved
- the possible benefits of their involvement, including future possibilities beyond the pilot project
- to address any initial areas of concern with regard to the project, including thinking through culture-specific issues and other practical needs and how this may be communicated to the staff of the historic houses

Leaflets and information about the historic houses were given to the Community Group Worker to support their task of enthusing and engaging members of their community in the visit. Drumlanrig Castle was exceptional in that they additionally offered a resource for the use of the group to stimulate interest. Lord Dalkeith lent the Community Worker a set of over 50 slides, so that he was able to put on a slide show for members of his community.

3.4 Pre-visit Meetings at the historic houses

BEN Development Workers and the Community Group Workers met with the personnel of the historic houses to:
- discuss ethnic participation in the built and natural environment in relation to what the house has to offer
- issues of concern
- specific cultural needs
- discuss the planning of the visit
- discuss a programme for the visit

Attendance at the meetings included different combinations of the owners of the historic houses, house managers, estate managers, marketing manager, rangers, a placement student, the BEN Development Workers, the Community Group Worker, volunteers from the ethnic community groups. Each meeting was combined with a visit to the historic houses, its grounds and attractions. The meeting was followed up by the confirmation of the provision of services which attend to culture-specific needs (such as the availability of a quiet room for prayer for a Muslim group) and agreeing the date and the final programme of activities with the historic house.
4. The experience of Ethnic Community Groups

4.1 Perception of members of ethnic community groups about historic houses before the visits

a. There was a general perception by ethnic minority participants, who had never visited a historic house that they had no idea of what a visit may be like. Some said that it may just be old houses and old things. Others who had heard historic houses mentioned but never visited one thought that historic houses are meant to be:
   • beautiful
   • full of history
   • with extensive open green space

b. They indicated that:
   • if they had not been offered an organised opportunity to visit a historic house by an organisation which they knew, they would not consider going from solely by being given information or coming across leaflets and information. They pointed out that the leaflets we brought to show them showed a kind of people-free remote beauty that was outside their experience. There were never any people in the pictures. They could not imagine what it may be like to visit such places.
   • they were concerned that once they got there, there would not be enough to hold their interest. They worried about having too little to do. They thought that they may be bored by simply being stuck in a beautiful place.
   • they were not aware of information about historic houses, where they were and how to get there, what activities they may get involved in.
   • they had no idea what some of the activities offered may be like.

These were some of their comments before the visit:

“Although I was looking forward to the day, my children of 9 and 13 years old didn’t want to come - they thought it would be boring. Although I was told about the butterflies and fishes etc., I did not expect enough exciting things to fill the day ...they enjoyed it all”

“I had heard that it was a beautiful place and so wanted to know why people said that.”

“I did not think anything specific about the trip but because of the promise of an organised trip with BEN I expected it to be an enjoyable day out for my child and me.”
4.2 Activities and what went well during the visits

a. Participants were surprised at their powerful reaction to the beauty of the houses and the surroundings. In some particularly impressive houses, they found the experience overwhelming. Although there was a general perception that they were going to beautiful places, they did not expect that the beauty would hold their interest and that they would not be bored after looking around for a short time. Enjoying “doing nothing” in a beautiful place without being bored is a revelatory experience.

‘We enjoyed the view of the Castle and walking up to it.’

“We would like to come back to simply wander around the grounds”

“Would love to explore the forest and the castle grounds again”

“I would like to do the same thing - picnic, meeting people, exploring the surroundings”

b. Besides the different activities on offer, the participants mentioned that it provided the coming together of the community in a setting that is neutral and refreshing, a respite from bleak urban areas.

‘Being with other group members – it was a good mixture of people I knew and other people from different cultures.’

c. Some houses had purpose built attractions in their grounds, such as The Secret Garden (Kelburn Castle) and Aquatic House (Syon Park), which are aimed at entertainment for a wide range of ages. This aspect went down very well with families.

d. Some houses had features and objects which related to the countries of origin of particular participants. The Chinese group were bowled over by the Chinese porcelain at Arley House. They greeted the sight of these with cries of delight “These are from our country!”

e. The men’s group, Bangladeshi Multipurpose Centre, from Birmingham loved the fact that they were visiting a historic house which was lived in.

“We liked that fact that the house had a lived in look. Some things were scuffed. There were toys lying around. And Sir Richard welcoming us himself was great. He had a great sense of humour. We could not understand everything, but whenever he laughed we just laughed too !“

f. All the groups loved the history of the houses.

‘The guided tour of the house and the history behind it’

“Being an Afro Caribbean British woman, I realised that, by listening to a bit of British history, I needed to know much more about my roots.”

“Being in touch with British history made me feel that I want to find out more about my history”
g. The meeting between the owners of various houses and the ethnic minority visitors went extraordinarily well; beyond all expectations. They did not stereotype each other. Both parties were able to see each other as individuals and to take an interest in each others' life experiences. There were generous and warm gestures from both sides.

“We brought Indian sweets as a present, an appreciation of the welcome given to us by Sir Richard”

“We brought food, cooked in Thai and Chinese styles. Lord Ashbrook picnicked with us and we exchanged food. He enjoyed it very much and told us many stories of his times in China.”

“We can identify with his loss - the fact that although he is still rich, he can no longer afford to live in this beautiful house anymore. We had a beautiful house in Pakistan too. We lost everything when we had to leave.”

“It was wonderful to be greeted by the staff with tea and Scottish home-made shortbread”

4.3 What did not go so well during the visits

a. The elderly members who experienced individual difficulties, particularly because the historic house involved a long 2 hour journey which also went along some winding roads. This is in combination with a very hot summer’s day, which turned out to be the hottest day of the year.

“The time taken to organise the bus”

“Not enough chairs to sit”

“The staircase was too narrow”

“I felt sick from the long journey”
b. Many of the houses were within an hour’s reach of the cities, but others were much further and there is very poor public transport.

“Difficult to find in the map”

“No public transportation to reach it easily”

c. There was an instance on one of the visits where the contact at the house may have failed to communicate their involvement in the project to other staff. This meant after the initial planning work, the group arrived without staff at the house being aware of the group and their purpose for the visit. This made the BEN Development Worker feel embarrassed and the community group project worker feel uncomfortable. However the visit went well after some explanations.

d. Some participants wanted very much to take photos inside a historic house and this was not permitted.

“I was not allowed to take photographs to inspire other folks”

e. In bad weather indoor activity and a contingency plan is important

“It was a very wet damp day when we visited Syon House”

f. The rest of the participants emphatically stated how well everything went. Here are some comments :

“Everything went so well”

“Nothing. Everything is good”
5. The experience of the historic houses

5.1 Visitors from ethnic communities before the pilot

Only 2 out of the 8 houses have had visitors from ethnic minority communities before this pilot project.

“We conducted some guided walks with ethnic groups but not with a view to developing involvement strategically”  Kelburn

“We ran an Indian Arts Fair which brought us into contact with many Scottish based Indian arts and community groups. People from the Indian community came out to Traquair for the first time. We realised that this can be a way of accessing new visitors from the ethnic communities and plan to theme the coming fair “Hidden cultures in Scotland”  Traquair

5.2 Ethnic monitoring

8 out of 8 have not done any ethnic monitoring

5.3 Features and range of activities offered

Please refer to Table.

5.4 Avenues used for promotion

Mentioned by all:
- promotional leaflets
- press releases resulting in media coverage
- entries in guidebooks
- directories and other tourist media
- word of mouth

Other avenues of promotion mentioned:
- talks
- slide shows
- attendance at special events/trade shows
- local advertising
- newsletter via email
- internet

5.5 Barriers historic houses are aware of in relation to their site

Barriers identified by the houses:
- entry fee
- location in relation to the travelling time needed from large towns
- poor public transport links
• lack of staff skills to engage properly with ethnic groups
• language
• perception
• lack of enablement

“We could benefit from more staff training to identify the needs and interests of ethnic communities” Kelburn

“Few ethnic communities are local so transport from further afield is the biggest barrier. We are off the beaten track with a poor bus service. As visiting historic houses is not an established activity for many of these groups, the biggest challenge is how to make these properties more accessible and attractive to them” Traquair

5.6 Cultural dimensions/features within the historic houses

“Oriental porcelain” Arley

“Historical connections with New Zealand. Will be holding a New Zealand Weekend looking at the culture and beliefs of the native New Zealanders” Kelburn

“Chinese armorial service. West Indian and Indian connections” Tissington

5.7 Additional comments from historic houses

“We would welcome visits from ethnic minorities unreservedly, provided they can pay or be funded. We would welcome any group at any time through the year and hope that the HHA/BEN relationship can flourish” Arley

“Within our service a Communities Memories Officer has been appointed” Tredegar
5.8 Challenges identified

- language
- group characteristics and conditions such as the weather for the day
- culture-specific needs
- internal organisational communication

“Perhaps language. The interpreters brought along by the group did very well.” Arley

“The extended walking combined with hot weather was difficult for some of the elderly” Drumlanrig

“The Muslim all female group involved the desirability of having a female member of staff for pre-visit planning and leading of activities” Kelburn

“Language for some” Tissington

“There seemed to be some problems of communication between the house staff and the group. However, we are still keen to foster links with ethnic communities for the future” Traquair

“Nothing that could not be overcome, e.g. use of a suitable room as a prayer room for the Muslim group” Tredegar

5.9 Value of the experience of the pilot visits

- insight into social exclusion
- insight into the needs of ethnic minorities
- viewing the organisation of visits from a different perspective
- enjoyment of meeting ethnic minority groups
- new confidence in ability to welcome ethnic minority groups
- quality engagement with members of ethnic groups
- experiential learning about an area of work that is completely new for historic houses

“We gained an insight into the communities and now realise better that they could feel excluded (in particular if there are language difficulties)” Arley

“It is something which we have not been involved with and we would be interested in further participation” Drumlanrig

“The Rangers benefited by merely having quality time to talk to members of an ethnic community group” Kelburn

“It did give us a better insight into the needs of this type of group” Margam Park

“It was enjoyable” Syon

“We now know we can welcome ALL different groups” Tissington

“Very interesting to see the visit from a different perspective, e.g. travel arrangements” Tredegar
5.10 Would the expansion of similar projects where groups raise their own funds and run activities with the houses be beneficial?

6 out of the 8 feel that funded visits are important and beneficial

1 feels it is not applicable because entry is free for their house and 1 felt that funding ethnic groups would not impact on them particularly

5.11 What interested the group most during the visit

4 out of the 8 groups had very specific comments which related to special features of their historic houses or specific activities offered (these perceptions chime in with the responses of the community group members):

- guided tour of historic house
- gardens
- fly fishing demonstration
- making the “nature collage postcard”
- uniqueness of Tissington
- house interior and furnishings/furniture

"The group seemed to enjoy the gardens and the gentlemen involved enjoyed the fly fishing demonstration very much. They asked if they could try doing it the next time they come." Drumlanrig

"The group found the historical tour of the Castle of great interest. They also enjoyed making their own simple “nature collage postcard” while on their guided walk with the Ranger Service.” Kelburn

"The uniqueness of Tissington and the fact that I hope I changed the group’s perception of Tissington.” Tissington

"House interior and furnishings/furniture” Tredegar

The other 4 of the houses felt that there was general interest in everything.

"They were genuinely interested in everything they saw” Arley

5.12 Would you like to continue to work with the group which visited?

7 out of the 8 historic houses want to continue work with the particular group which visited. The exception has difficulties seeing their way to the “relevance” around which they can build engagement with the site beyond the group accessing what there is directly.

"Yes, provided it can be properly financed” Arley

"Yes, the expression of the enthusiasm of the group to return resulted in the funding of a second visit by Lord Dalkeith himself. However, due to the most unfortunate incident of the theft of valuable paintings from the castle, the group found the castle was closed on the day.” Drumlanrig
“Yes, perhaps they may like to find out more about the herbal/medicinal properties of some of the plants they saw in the Glen. We are very interested in feedback.” Kelburn

“Yes” Margam

“Not really relevant” Syon

“Yes” Tissington

“Yes. Although there seemed to be some problems of communication between the house staff and the group, we are still keen to foster links with ethnic communities for the future” Traquair

“Yes if possible” Tredegar

5.13 Have you identified any developmental need which can enhance your capacity to increase the number of ethnic minority visitors?

The following aspects were identified:
- training of the staff of historic houses
- distribution of leaflets to ethnic communities
- advice
- networking
- sharing experience and practice with other houses

Alongside this, particular houses pointed to the fact that it is a new area of work so that they feel it is early days for them to point to specific needs

“This is the first time that we have been involved in such a project and I feel that staff would be happy to do more but that we all could benefit from training” Arley

“We are interested in finding out about training, sources of advice and any networking opportunities. We would also like to meet with staff from other houses that took part in this pilot to discuss and analyse how things went during their visits” Kelburn
5.14 Is there anything else you would like to tell us about?

- keenness to continue
- appreciation of the value and benefit of the project
- awareness of the potential in the fact of large numbers of ethnic minority people in cities

“We are keen to promote Arley as a recreational and educational venue as much as possible - there are large numbers of people in the big cities nearby, many of ethnic minority backgrounds. Any help in sending us groups will be recognised in that we would do our best to make the visits instructive and enjoyable. I would welcome a telephone discussion as to how this project could be taken forward and I can of course answer any further questions which may arise.” Arley

“I think this is a very valuable project and could be extremely beneficial to all involved in the long run” Tissington
6. Feedback from BEN Staff and Community Group Workers

6.1 Interest in history
The genuine interest in British history expressed by all the groups right across the age range was a surprise and is extremely significant. This type of visit, built around a feature of historical interest, is completely new to ethnic community groups as a social pastime. It is a discovery for them.

“Good scenery and good weather, history and culture. We all enjoyed it. It was very educational for the history. I enjoyed the historic house, the grand dining room and the family history behind it most.”

“This visit is a valuable time for me. I can learn more history in England”

“The family history of Lord Ashbrook, the house’s construction, settings..it is a very good memory”

6.2 Contribution to quality of life
The contribution of such visits to the quality of life of ethnic community groups cannot be underestimated. Many groups simply never leave the inner cities. When they are actually at the site, it is borne out that they are interested in everything. The warm welcome, the beauty and history of the places really captivated them. Relaxing and undertaking activities in the open, having history as a focus for interest - it is a great combination. It has implications for physical and social health.

“I enjoy the natural scenery and feel very comfortable”

6.3 Contribution to social cohesion
Such visits have implications for the work of enabling social cohesion, part of which is about knowledge and experience of the history, people and landscape of this country which is now their home and contact with members of the mainstream community and with mainstream organisations....all within a positive atmosphere.

“The friendliness of the tour guide was most unexpected”

“very friendly atmosphere, sense of anticipation”

“I never knew such places existed”

“I love the pictures and the wonderful castle”

“I enjoyed everything”

6.4 Ambassadors and champions for encouraging visits to historic houses
As a result of first visits to historic houses, there are already ambassadors for historic house visits, among Community Workers and the members of the ethnic community groups. This is something to build on.
“I would like to visit again, also recommend the place to my friends and relatives”

“I will tell all my friends it’s a nice place to visit”

“We would like to arrange more visits”

6.5 An initial essential framework of support

6.5.1 Incentives and support for new visitors from ethnic community groups
The enthusiasm has to be interpreted within the framework of support which was provided. The members of ethnic community groups who came on the visit had no idea what to expect. Without the incentive of an organised trip which was all paid for, plus the assurance by BEN of a positive experience, they would not have gone and experienced historic houses for the first time. The fact is that people do not simply go off into the unknown by themselves when there is cost and effort involved plus a risk that it may all turn out badly.

“I have never heard of it before”

“We were happily surprised. We did not visit before because we were not aware that such historic houses existed. We were expecting an old period historic building. It turned out to be completely different. We were really delighted to see greenery, gardens, the library and period features. We were impressed with the 600 year old buildings and houses and pleased to see the interior including the art, the china.”

6.5.2 Support for historic houses to develop insight and skills to engage effectively with ethnic groups
Similarly the owners and staff of historic houses need support. Historic houses have listed among their needs: networking, facilitation of contact, training re cultural sensitivities, identification and development of special projects around activities, materials and resources for ethnic groups.

6.6 Addressing barriers
There are different scenarios when it comes to addressing barriers. It all depends on building a good relationship with the group, knowing the specifics about a spectrum of needs (social context, culture, religion, their feelings and responses to the features and activities of a property) and being able to interpret and respond to the circumstances as a whole. The following are examples of the diverse scenarios around the issue of transport.
6.6.1 Isolated individuals
Some members of the ethnic community groups are very isolated as well as being without individual transport. There is a real need to organise group trips.

“There was no one to take me”

6.6.2 Community groups with resources
Particular community groups are resourced enough to fund their own trips. They have their own minibus, and they prefer to make their own picnic. So the costs are reduced to a group visit entry fee which they can pay for as individual or with minimal fundraising. After being enthused by a visit to Arley Hall, the Chinese group from Manchester financed an extra trip which was not part of this pilot programme and went to Tissington.

6.6.3 Community groups without resources
Hiring minibuses is expensive. For groups without their own transport, it is the main cost for a trip. The local voluntary sector and local authority’s positioning with regards to leisure is also important. Some areas are provided with a local community bus which they can book for free so the transport costs are reduced to petrol. However, trips out are seasonal and sometimes vehicles are booked out on the date you need so you are left high and dry with the transport cost problem. If there is enough demand, maybe in the future groups can come together as a consortium to fundraise for a minibus of their own.

6.6.4 The different circumstances of particular groups
The actual experience of getting to the houses was important. Some of the houses were remote and a significant amount of time was needed to get there, cutting into the programme time. For groups which need a short day because of their trade or because they tire easily, this is a consideration. Some roads were windy, and some of the elderly members felt ill. We also need to know if there is the option of satisfactory public transport. Such information and experience is needed for an assessment of who to target within the community in relation to different sites.

6.7 Face to face meetings
The face to face meetings between the owners and staff of the houses with the Community Worker and other community representatives are really important at this stage of development.

6.7.1 Lack of experience of historic houses
It is not just the members of the ethnic community groups who are not familiar with historic house and what they have to offer, the Community Workers themselves did not know about this area of work. ..so how can they be expected to enthuse their community members ? There is a real need to invest in group trips which consist entirely of project workers from community groups to enable them to gain knowledge and confidence in this area of work. They need to undertake a range of activities, experience the enjoyment themselves. They are the enablers of trips into the future.

6.7.2 Health and safety considerations
Pre-visits are important for assessing the suitability of different places and what they have to offer in relation to the characteristics of different members of ethnic community groups. For example, for all groups, what is the contingency plan when it rains? Is there a female ranger to work with a group of Muslim young women? Is there enough activity
indoors to carry the day? Is it a place with very little to offer young children? Are there rivers and lakes to be aware of? Are there very steep staircases or uneven ground?... and so on.

6.7.3 Laying down the basis for a working relationship
a. It breaks the ice. Both parties gain from knowing something of what to expect. Needs can be stated and attended to. For example, one venue was able to identify a room which could be used for prayer.

b. There were no serious racist incidents but there was an incident in which a Muslim group of young women were disturbed at prayer. The day was very hot and they decided it would be really nice to pray outside when there are such extensive grounds. But, a white group settled really close to them and stared, opening cans of beer and were perceived to have been making comments directed at them although these could not be heard. They just felt uncomfortable and left the area without finishing their prayers. Meeting the house staff gives a community group the important sense that if something really goes wrong, there are members of the house staff we have met who we can appeal to on the spot.

6.8 Training for the staff of historic houses

6.8.1 Getting beyond the basics
The very basic awareness workshop and the face to face meetings are only a first step. They are not really adequate as many of the houses themselves pointed out by their expression of interest in more training. The learning is also experiential rather than purely informational. The way to grow this awareness is through a mixture of workshops allied to the review of the experience of different visits. One house very astutely pointed to the interest for sharing experience and reviewing experience.

6.8.2 Miscommunications, unevenness of awareness and talent among house staff and volunteers

a. There was a series of miscommunications with one historic house. When the BEN Development Worker arrived with the Community Worker and representative of a group, the staff of the historic house claimed that no one knew about the pre-visit meeting although the appointment had been re-confirmed. They were then given a member of staff who knew nothing about the project. The BEN worker was embarrassed to have to explain the project in front of the Community Workers, who felt very uncomfortable. On the actual visit, communications re waived fees for the house tour seemed to have failed to get through to the relevant staff. The group waited while this was sorted out. The house was informed beforehand that the group will be bringing their own picnic and therefore needed no special provision at the cafe. But another mistaken message led to their enthusiastic cafe chef going to the trouble of preparing suitable food for nothing. These behind the scenes difficulties affected the BEN Development Worker and the Community Group Worker. The visiting group had a wonderful time, enjoying the beautiful place in perfect weather.

b. The house manager of one historic house insisted that young people were unsuitable and refused to accept the planned teenage group despite repeated reassurances from the Community Worker, leading to the group pulling out of the programme. The BEN Worker concluded that he was not confident that the teenage group would resist
touching valuable objects - he was also anxious to ensure a good visit and wanted a “mature group” as he was convinced that the young people would be bored. A new group had to be identified and only a family group could be found at short notice. The BEN Worker was however convinced that the house had genuine interest for the whole age range. When she rang back, anxious to reassure the house manager that the children would be guaranteed to be on their best behaviour, so that he would accept the group, the person in charge with whom she spoke was a different person, who simply enquired about the characteristics of the group, listened to what was needed and said, “I have just the right person for you as a guide.” The visit and guided tour went really well. There were children ranging from 3 to 16 and they were enthralled by the historic house. The guide brilliantly linked introductions to particular objects to the religious background of the group.

“I did notice that during our visit we seemed to be guarded by an extraordinary number of room stewards. In one small corridor with hardly enough space, there were 3 of them. On our pre-visit to see what the house had to offer, I certainly did not see so many room stewards in the historic house. Although the group will not have noticed, I felt that we were over-policed. I was so worried, but although we planned for the guided tour in the historic house to take only an hour, some of the children were so interested and had so many questions that the session lasted for one and half hours. The guide also identified particular objects which she encouraged them to touch. It turned out really well.”

c. The volunteer room stewards at various houses met groups with a range of reactions from a warm welcome to wariness. There were also some stereotyping and insensitive questions to some members of the ethnic community groups. But, the overall absolute enjoyment of the visits simply eclipsed these minor incidents.

6.8.3 Racism
We are always asked about the issue of “racism in the countryside” and whether that should stop ethnic minority groups from venturing beyond the cities. Our answer is that racism is a fact whether in urban or rural areas, but so is goodwill. The difference is that because there are no links to that goodwill in rural areas, it feels more threatening. That is why initiatives which enable ethnic community groups to build relationships with organisations of goodwill beyond the cities is so important. It opens a new world of experience, enabling them to access many positive activities which we all take for granted.

6.9 Significance of such visits to isolated newly arrived groups within ethnic communities

6.9.1 ESOL groups
The group of men, aged 20 to 34 from the City College in Birmingham are an example of a newly arrived group which works in the catering industry. The hours are long and cut into the day. They all have to be at work from 4pm. Many work 7 days a week. Yet, they have made time to study English at the college. The maximum travelling time for a day trip is 1.5 hours in order that the visit at a venue is not too short. Relaxation, new experience, historic and natural beauty, pleasure and contact with aspects of a country new to them is of enormous benefit to the quality of their urban-bound lives. It has been suggested that a chance to see rural farm life would be useful, as it will feed into some of their personal heritage. Many of them were born in the countryside of their country of
origin. They also expressed an interest in a translated backup to the programme. More activities would also instil a sense of realism into the concept of life in a very old English heritage site. Such visits and activities can play a key role in integrating newly arrived groups into the social, cultural and physical setting of their new country of residence.

6.9.2 Special welcoming gestures from owners of historic houses
Some of the owners of the historic houses had made special efforts to welcome and engage socially with the ethnic minority groups. This created scenarios which are extra to the usual visits to historic houses. The community groups involved have a sense of having been received into the world of the owners of the historic houses. They feel that they have visited homes rather than just historic houses. They were also able to engage in mutual cultural gestures, sharing aspects of themselves as well as feeling culturally recognised. Far too often ethnic minority groups are made to feel that they are always simply problems to be dealt with, tolerated rather than valued for what they may have to offer as who they are. The groups involved have been able to enjoy these encounters even across language difficulties, using interpreters. These experiences of acceptance and personal welcome have been deeply important to them.

6.9.3 Social settings
Pleasurable trips enable isolated members of ethnic communities to come together, meet new people and make new friendships in an enjoyable setting.

6.10 Existing good practice
Some historic houses have aspects of good practice which can be usefully shared with others, although these have to be seen in the context of the different staff capacities of each of the houses.

6.10.1 Slide Pack Resources
Drumlanrig Castle lent the community group a set of slides which enabled the Community Worker to show participants something of what they may encounter. This was very useful, especially when combined with introductions and comments from the group leader who has made a pre-visit. Groups do find it difficult to visualise this new experience being offered to them, and this takes them a little along the way.

6.10.2 Touching items
It was great that members of the group were allowed to touch everything at Kelburn Castle, even sit in the chairs etc. If it is possible to purposefully identify areas of the house or particular objects which can be handled it would increase the pleasure of the experience enormously.

6.10.3 Interpretation
Some guides were particularly imaginative and linked and expanded their talks to relate to the groups’ culture or religion. Their enthusiasm and talent can be acknowledged, nurtured, and strategically used to enable and enlighten other staff to engage more successfully with ethnic minority groups.

6.10.4 Staff with community orientated skills
Particular historic houses which have invested in workers who specialise in engaging with the community are markedly more confident in engaging with ethnic community groups, e.g. Kelburn Castle’s Ranger Service. The extension of additional knowledge re cultural sensitivities seems to be perceived as an interesting and “easy” next step.
7. Outcomes, Conclusions and Recommended Actions

The project was taken forward with huge amount of energy, commitment and enthusiasm from all involved. It has been a fantastic learning experience for everyone and has really opened up understanding. Particular successes were the idea of picnics and sharing of food (cultural exchange in action) and the “unstuffiness” of the HHA houses. Where it went extremely well was when a lot of preparation had been undertaken by both the BEN officers and the owners/managers, and care and thought had gone into designing the visit. Among HHA Members, some have a particular flair for working with people and engaged naturally and genuinely with the groups.

One of the main challenges was that this a was a target project to be delivered within a specific time frame with support from different BEN workers who already had their own planned work programme agenda. This means that on few occasions, there was not sufficient time set aside for some aspects of the practical side of the project. This may have begun to lose the project some goodwill. There is also the fact of the start/stop reality of this pilot project until action for the next step is decided. However, when working with community groups, delays in communication is common. Professional organisations have their agenda and community groups which we seek to involve have no obligation to respond, and we have to fit in with their rate of response and stay firm in our confidence and interest in them.

7.1 Maximising the outcomes of the pilot project and enabling more visits

7.1.1 Enjoyment of historic houses
The overwhelming consensus was that everyone enjoyed themselves. 100% of the ethnic community groups involved enjoyed the visits and would like to return. A visit that simply offers a guided tour of a historic house with the enjoyment of its gardens and grounds has sufficient interest for new visitors from ethnic communities.

“I liked everything, the trip was well organised”

7.1.2 A new and revelatory experience
Almost all respondents felt the visit has not changed their initial perception as such because their expectations of the beauty, history and landscape of the historic houses were conceived in a vacuum. However, the strength of the reaction to the actual surroundings they experienced and the enduring interest of a beautiful place was a revelation.

“I would like to come back to have a walk around the grounds and explore”

7.1.3 Introduction to a new form of leisure activity
The potential for enjoyment of this form of pastime, and other forms of opportunity and activities, far exceeds their expectation. Many commented that what was offered could not be taken advantage of in one visit. Many of the sites have additional attractions and programmes of events and activities, including those which are targeted at children. These sites in particular hold diverse interests for the whole age range.

“The houses have incorporated diversity of exciting things to do”

“There is so much to see and hear. One day is certainly not enough to take it all in”

“This is a historic house, but they have incorporated in the grounds lots of things for children’s play.”
7.1.4 An expansion of interest from ethnic groups
The majority of respondents indicated the desire to go back and visit historic houses. Through dialogue with BEN Development Workers and the Community Workers, it is estimated that the various locations can expect that there are 7 to 10 times the number of interested groups in the various locations we targeted. There is a commercial aspect to opening up access by ethnic groups to historic houses. There is a rising middle class within these communities. Additionally, disadvantaged groups can raise money for programmes of visits and activities which they become interested in. So historic houses can benefit from grant monies raised by groups.

7.1.5 Increased confidence of historic houses that an expansion of visits from ethnic groups can be a reality
The experience of the pilot project has opened up a new area of opportunity for historic houses and ethnic minorities. All this has been achieved against a background of the lack of motivation for groups to venture into new areas where there is no context of engagement within the community. This pilot project has demonstrated that incentives and the organisation of initial trips to introduce new peer group experience into ethnic communities is effective. It has encouraged historic houses to become more confident that expansion of visits by ethnic minorities can be a reality.

“We now know that we can welcome ALL different groups”

Action:
• Maximise the new opportunities created to expand access by ethnic groups to historic houses through implementing a follow-up project to widen and deepen the experience of visiting historic houses by enabling return visits, and supporting the participation of new ethnic community groups
• Individual historic houses can encourage more visits and consider implementing taster programmes for the particular ethnic communities they are in touch with to embed the first experience of the full range of activities and experiences offered by their site within particular ethnic communities

7.2 The creation of an initial positive image of historic houses

7.2.1 The engagement of the owners of historic houses with ethnic groups
Much goodwill has been created through the special efforts of the owners of particular historic houses to personally engage with ethnic community groups. This goodwill has been communicated throughout the ethnic communities and is significant in creating a welcoming image for the historic houses involved.

“I am writing on behalf of the MWRC. We all had an enjoyable time, and everyone was most impressed, both by Kelburn Castle itself, and by the care and welcome given to us by Lord Glasgow and all the staff at Kelburn as well as by yourself... Thank you for organising... this trip which opened up new experiences for many who attended and was both enjoyable and educational”

Action:
• Other owners of historic houses may be encouraged and stimulated to personally engage with ethnic community groups, bringing an additional dimension to the relationship of historic houses to ethnic community groups
7.2.2 Promotion and information
There is a strong tradition within the heritage sector of portraying historic properties through the use of beautifully composed but people-free photos. Ethnic community groups that have not been to such places and seen and experienced them as visitors amongst others, they project an image that is people-unfriendly and remote, as if they are not meant for people to relate to.

Action:
• There is a case for a general poster or leaflet to promote visits to historic houses depicting ethnic minority people enjoying aspects of historic houses
• Small amounts of money to buy space in community newsletters enabling the reproduction of photos alongside articles would be a very direct way of promoting awareness of what historic houses have to offer. It is both drip feed education and building up awareness and motivation to go on such visits

7.2.3 Engaging with the media
a. BBC Online covered one of our visits (See Appendix). With a pioneering project such as this, it is important to pay attention to the possible role of the media in supporting our progress and to work to deepen the understanding by media personnel of the issues we are dealing with.

b. When engaging ethnic minorities in a new area, it is important that there is care and sensitivity when involving the media. It is important that stakeholders are able to promote the project to the wider community and public. However, any misunderstanding about the background, processes and reasons for the project, can seriously undermine all the good work and intentions. Statements from beneficiaries in an area new to them can be poorly understood and portrayed in the wrong context by the media.

Action:
• Any interest from the media should be nurtured and efforts made to enable media personnel to follow and gain a deeper understanding of the pioneering work of enabling access by ethnic groups to historic houses
• BEN has produced guidelines for facilitating the engagement of ethnic community groups with the media in a socially and culturally sensitive way (See Appendix).

7.3 A framework of development and support

7.3.1 Availability and cost of transport
Some historic houses are a long distance away from where most ethnic groups are in the inner cities. There are also poor or non-existent public transport links. The cost of hiring coaches or minibuses can be substantial.

Action:
• Historic houses could address the possibility of negotiating for the establishment of good public transport links to increase the accessibility of their sites to groups which do not have their own transport
• Fundraising support should be given to groups to access resources from different grant schemes to address the cost of transport
7.3.2 Building the capacity of the staff of historic houses to engage effectively with ethnic groups

The unevenness of the staff of historic houses, in their commitment and their capacity to take into account the social and cultural needs of ethnic minority groups in relation to the facilities and programmes of activities offered, needs to be addressed. There is evidence from the delivery of this pilot that historic houses have identified for themselves that they need training, advice and networking support in order to build a sustainable relationship with ethnic minority communities. Beyond the initial positive experience for all involved in this project, it is necessary for historic houses to commit to nurturing interest and connections with ethnic community groups. An essential first step is to develop the confidence and skills among their own staff to reach out to those entirely new to this area of opportunity.

“We must be aware that we need to ensure in the future that we reach out to groups who are not so immediately engaged “

“I fully support your proposal that we could provide staff training advice and networking support for houses. This, coupled with a dedicated person to talk to, would be an invaluable service and perhaps the single most useful thing we could do “

Action:
- Invest in further training, developmental support and experiential learning of the staff of historic houses in order to enable them to gain the knowledge and skills to work effectively with ethnic groups
- Sharing good practice and experience among historic houses

7.3.3 Maintaining a Dialogue

Although the project has been very successful, the links between historic houses and the communities are not sufficiently established and may be lost without further action being taken.

“ I feel that we must act quickly to prevent the important links which we have already established from disappearing “

Action:
- Maintain dialogue with the ethnic community groups which have been involved and engage them with the design of a follow-up project

7.3.4 Ethnic monitoring

None of the individual historic houses undertake ethnic monitoring. This can be part of visitor monitoring forms. This will support the measuring of progress. Visits to historic houses forms part of the current issue of access to the countryside. DEFRA has given the Countryside Agency, through its Diversity Research Programme, the task of researching the overall picture of access to the countryside.

Action:
- Some houses have received ethnic minority group visitors after the pilot. It would have been good to include a question on visitor monitoring forms or periodic surveys to identify how a group heard about the house.
7.3.5 Language barriers and educational opportunities

a. The project workers of all ethnic community groups speak good English so there is no barrier to negotiations and arrangements with historic houses with regard to visits. Visiting groups purposefully brought their own interpreters - simply bilingual community members. However, the vocabulary of history and historic objects sometimes eludes them.

Action:
• There is a case for the training of community interpreter volunteers, exposing them to a range of houses and grounds and the associated vocabulary.
• Particular houses have indicated that they will consider producing materials in different languages if there is a sufficient demand for it.

b. Visits can be purely for pleasure, but they also have the potential to be a stimulus to learning. The class from City College (who are members of the Bangladeshi Multipurpose Centre) worked with the Course Tutor to prepare materials which focus on the objects, features, information and experience of Tissington Hall. The result was that the group combined enjoyment with purpose. The Course Tutor and the BEN Development Worker learnt how the members of the group paid extra attention to the talk and took special interest in noticing the detail of objects and features of the house in order to use the experience to express themselves in English. They also thought that supporting materials about the house in their own language would have assisted their learning further.

Action:
• The development of resource materials which support the learning of English through the use of a visit to a historic house, in partnership with colleges
• Since the completion of the Pilot Project, the Course Tutor has shared the beneficial experience with tutors from some 15 colleges across the Birmingham area, generating much interest. He has indicated that there may be enough interest to formulate a discreet project on designing resource materials in partnership with historic houses and making visits to historic houses a part of such English Courses

7.4 Building the relationship between ethnic groups and historic houses

7.4.1 Enabling peer group experience

Prior to the visits most of the ethnic minority group participants were not aware of what it is like to visit a historic house or of the diversity of other activities being offered. Most ethnic minority individuals simply do not know what the activities actually are, e.g. fly fishing. Within peer groups, there is simply no one to ask about such experiences. Incentives to take part in taster programmes of activities are important to embed the knowledge and experience of the range of activities into ethnic communities. The pilot project has shown that because members of ethnic groups have signed up to these trips due to the encouragement of BEN and the incentive of a fully organised and paid for trip that promises enjoyment, the motivation for taking part is still fragile. Some will simply change their mind and not come as a result of the most mundane reasons like feeling a bit tired or a child being fractious on the day, especially if the weather is not good. We have to accept this and build on the fact that building up positive experience by their peers will ultimately draw them in. Besides the members of ethnic communities, key personnel such as the community leaders or the project workers of ethnic community groups, as part of the ethnic community, do not themselves have the experience of visiting historic houses. So how can we expect them, who are key to acting as a bridge
to their members, to feel able to enthuse and encourage their community to try a new experience?

Action:
• As part of a follow-up project, taster programmes can be designed to systematically introduce ethnic community groups to what historic houses have to offer, creating peer experience so that information can be cascaded to others
• A follow-up project may consider the investment of the organisation of visits which are specifically for Community Leaders and Community Workers, who can become enthused and informed about what historic houses have to offer. They are key decision makers for programmes of visits (which are part of the agenda of many ethnic community groups). They can both organise visits and cascade the information to members of their community groups

7.4.2 Enabling active engagement with historic houses

a. There are opportunities for ethnic minority groups to be actively involved in historic houses. This is a move away from just being passive visitors but rather maintaining a relationship and dialogue with the owners of historic houses.

“We could, if there was interest, set up a regular programme of walks with an ethnic community. We would welcome further discussion with BEN to examine how groups could use our existing facilities on a more regular basis”

b. Particular participants have also voiced their interest. It is important to offer activities which aim to deepen interest. These may lead to volunteering in the future.

“We are interested in finding out more about how the furniture is taken care of. Perhaps even be shown how to do it”

c. Some powerful themes for engagement between historic houses and ethnic communities are not immediately obvious, and are revealed through a continued dialogue with particular ethnic groups.

“As they were a Pentecostal Gospel Singer groups, we can’t see a theme that can further develop something”

From the evaluation forms and in conversation with the group, BEN was able to tap into their ideas and understand something of their vision in response to the experience of the visit. The group talked about how they were truly impressed by the natural beauty of the grounds and the link to the theme of creation. Many of their members expressed a desire to return simply to wander and appreciate the grounds. This merges with the fact that this is a very spiritually orientated group which is constantly seeking out opportunities for spiritual experience. They shared the fact of the reality that they can have a group prayer activity even in the presence of others. They can walk through the grounds, linking their appreciation of the beautiful surroundings to the praise of God and maintain a level of communication with God through His creation which is all around them.

Action:
• Bring interested historic houses and ethnic community groups together to brainstorm and identify specific themes of enduring interest around which a more continual interest, beyond being passive visitors, can be developed
• The development of group some specific activities will only emerge through building on and deepening the relationship with community groups which have visited over time.

7.4.3 Multicultural features

The projection of the fact of an inclusive multicultural history draws strong emotional responses. Making these aspects visible is an area of development. A sense of presence within a shared British history and therefore a sense of belonging is very important in the promotion of diversity and social cohesion. Venturing into rural areas is then set in the context of legitimate presence. Some of the historic houses involved in this pilot have specific multicultural features, objects or history which can be used to stimulate an ongoing working relationship with particular ethnic minority groups through engaging them to jointly develop materials or resources targeted at them.

“We do have Chinese armorial service. West Indian and Indian connections”

Some multicultural features are not linked to the specific history of the house, but to the overall connections of Britain to the world. One important aspect is the range of plants from all over the world, which is evident in almost every historic house. Some rightly make much of outstanding specimens in their gardens or grounds. Herb gardens and kitchen gardens are other common features which resonate with ethnic groups in the context of the origins of the plants and the medicinal and everyday uses of plants.

Actions:
• Identify and maximise the use of links to multicultural features when working with ethnic groups, including developing interpretative information and activities around such features, e.g. plant trials of plants originating from different countries.
8. Next Steps

8.1 Social inclusion and privately owned historic houses

8.1.1 In the present political climate, action for social inclusion within the historic environment sector is a high priority.

8.1.2 In contrast to organisations which have a clear constitutional remit to address social inclusion (for example the National Trust and English Heritage), the members of the HHA are independent private owners of historic properties who have the choice of taking action for ethnic inclusion. The People and Historic Places project has revealed the enormous goodwill which can be released and the additional dimensions which emerge from the context of private ownership.

8.1.3 The Historic Houses Association and the participating historic houses have demonstrated their commitment to ethnic inclusion and invested in the first national pilot project to introduce ethnic community groups to what historic houses have to offer. The outcomes show us that:

- Access to private historic houses involve multi-faceted activities which yield significant and clear benefits to ethnic communities in relation to access to heritage, integrated with a range of cross-sectoral policy targets including informal education, lifelong learning and capacity building, outdoor activity and health, social inclusion and cohesion, equal opportunities, the promotion of race equality, volunteering, environmental awareness, access to recreation and green spaces, and quality of life
- There is an economic dimension to nurturing interest and enabling access by ethnic groups to private historic houses. There is a rising middle class who may in the future be paying visitors. In relation to disadvantaged groups, the resulting motivation to fundraise for access means that there will be an economic contribution to the fabric of the historic environment through the entry fees and services (such as transport) which grant monies will fund.

8.2 Resourcing future project work

8.2.1 Strategic development for access to historic houses by ethnic communities

For further strategic work to continue in relation to opening up access to private historic houses by ethnic communities, it is necessary for funding bodies to recognise:

- The potential of private historic houses to contribute significantly to social policy
- The necessary support framework in terms of outreach to ethnic communities to generate initial interest, negotiate suitable first visits, and establish links between historic houses and community groups requires dedicated skilled staff and incurs significant costs and other resources
- Recognise that grant monies focused on enabling visits and activities will contribute to the care and running of properties within the historic environment
- See clearly that focused projects need to be funded to enable private historic houses to take on a role that is outside their organisational status

8.2.2 Follow-up project

A follow-up project which provides dedicated support to historic houses and ethnic community groups to enable access by ethnic communities to what historic houses have on offer. The outcomes of the pilot project points to a follow-up project which:
• Supports historic houses and ethnic community groups new to the work
• Supports historic houses and ethnic community groups which are engaged with this work to expand the work, enabling repeat visits by ethnic community groups to a range of properties within easy reach
• Supports historic houses and ethnic community groups to deepen their relationships, explore and develop different activities and project forms - including interpretation, volunteering, and the generation of culturally oriented activities such as trails for objects or plants from a particular country
• Tracks issues and concerns, seeking solutions for these in partnership with historic houses and ethnic community groups
• Tracks good practice and produces resources which share good practice and experience to stimulate further development
• Tracks the benefits of the project thereby strengthening the basis for the funding of such projects
• Provides expertise, training, networking and developmental support to build the capacity of historic houses and ethnic community groups to take independent action

To do this in the depth proposed would require a national development co-ordinator. BEN and the HHA will explore with external funders (including HLF, English Heritage and Regional Development Agencies) opportunities for taking this forward.

8.3 Maximising the links made through the People and Historic Places Project
There are a number of ways in which the work of enabling ethnic communities to access historic houses can be taken forward:

8.3.1 Initiatives by individual historic houses
Individual historic houses may wish to develop their own initiatives. BEN has a training and consultancy service and is able to work as advisor, facilitator or trainer as needed to address the needs of different organisations. We can also advise on funding possibilities. Individual historic houses may also choose to develop their own initiatives while taking part in a follow-up project which enables them to benefit from sharing experience and good practice within a network of historic houses with a common aim of increasing visits from ethnic communities.

8.3.2 Building on the links made
Alternatively, historic houses which have participated in the pilot project can choose to take steps to build on the contacts made and the knowledge and experience which have been gained without taking on an initiative with an additional defined programme of work. There are particular opportunities for the support of this work in each country. Historic houses may wish to consider the following as and when you wish to without adding a significant workload to your programme of work:

• Join the BEN Network and benefit from the BEN Network services (signposting information and advice service, networking, funding opportunities for community groups, keeping in touch with good practice, the BEN Networking Conference which allows organisations to publicise what they offer and which puts members in touch with a diverse range of projects and ideas from all over the UK)
• Re-establish contact with the groups which have visited, keeping them informed re programmes of activities and any additional support you may be able to offer, taking care to clarify for yourselves the extent of staff and other resources you are able to commit. Individual groups have different capacities to fund their visits. Those community groups who need to can apply for funds from various sources with advice from BEN. Consider the ideas and wishes of the groups carefully
• Re-establish contact with the BEN Development Worker, who will always be happy to give advice and who can give some support to the local ethnic community group as long as requests do not substantially interfere with his or her overall work programme
• In England, make contact with the BEN Heritage Access Officer for England. His remit is to establish dialogue with organisations within the historic environment sector with a view to assisting organisations to consider and formulate partnerships and projects. In Scotland and Wales, make contact with the UK Partnership Development Officer, whose wide working remit include the same role. All contacts are on the BEN website www.ben-network.org.uk

- Visit to Margam Park - Mewn Cymru mixed group visit July 2003

• Buy in expertise from BEN in terms of training (if you wish it to be tailored to your needs) and advice by the hour as you need it. In Scotland, through the EQUAL Project, BEN is able to offer periodic free Diversity Awareness seminars which are targeted at the heritage and natural environment sectors. BEN has developmental projects in England (Manchester and Birmingham only) and in South Wales (Swansea), focused on ethnic participation which periodically runs free training seminars for environmental organisations wishing to work with ethnic groups - the process is generic. You may like to put your name down to be informed as to when these may be run
• Document and evaluate your work with ethnic community groups
• Use HHA as a focus for the development of access by ethnic groups to historic houses. Keep HHA informed of your progress and give them any notes and evaluations you may have in order to enable them to build up a picture of this work so that conclusions may inform any future projects
• Express your interest in participating in future projects to the HHA

8.3.3 Further recommendations for individual historic houses
Further recommendations specific to each of the participating houses will be sent to the respective houses by BEN.
8.4 HHA and BEN

HHA and BEN are keen to build on the achievements of the People and Historic Places project. A seminar is being organised to bring participants and other interested parties together to:

- celebrate the success of the pilot project
- thank everyone who has contributed to the pilot project
- give an opportunity for everyone to share experience and ideas for the future
- to lay down the basis for a follow-up project

Visit to Arley Hall - Wai Yin Chinese Women’s Society
visit by Chinese men and women
July 2003
Appendix 1 – HHA and participating historic houses

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Evaluation and Report

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Appendix 4 - Evaluation questions for Community Groups

What were your first impressions of Margam?

What were you expecting before you visited Margam Park?

Did this perception change after your visit?

What did you enjoy the most?

What was the most unexpected aspect?

Why have you never visited before?

Would you like to make a return visit?

What would you like to do?

Did you feel a sense of connection or familiarity eg similar plants and buildings with your country of origin?

What didn’t go so well?

Ideas for the future?
Appendix 5 - Evaluation questions for Historic Houses

All questions in Section A refer to issues prior to your involvement in the BEN/HHA pilot project. All questions in Section B refer to issues for future directions.

Section A

Is there/has there been any work/activity involving ethnic communities in your property? If so can you please tell us the extent of it?

Do you monitor ethnic participation statistically (this could be visitors, employees and other service providers)? If yes, please can we have any information available?

What are the kinds of services offered by your property to the public?

How do you promote your services to the public?

What do you think are the barriers if any to involving ethnic communities in your property?

Are there any multicultural themes, objects or history related to your property, which can be used to stimulate interest by ethnic groups. Please tell us about it.

Are there any particular opportunities eg. activities or talks, guided tours, outstanding features in your property which can be used to involve ethnic communities? Please tell us about it. (They do not have to be specifically related to ethnic minority cultures)

Anything else you would like to tell us about

Section B

Were there any challenges identified before and during the visit (please tell us about them if any)?

Has the experience been valuable to your property? Please tell us what you gained from the visit

Would expansion of similar projects where groups raise their own funds (e.g. entrance fees) and run activities with houses be beneficial?

What in your opinion, interested the group most during the visit?

Would you like to continue to work with the group that visited you in order to further develop something that the visit touched on? (For example the Chinese group that visited Arley Hall may be able to work with the property on a leaflet about Chinese porcelain).

Have you identified any developmental need which can enhance your capacity to increase the number of ethnic minority visitors? (For example, staff training, advice, networking support etc)

Anything else you would like to tell us about?
Opening up Britain's history
By Cindi John
BBC News Online community affairs reporter

It's a wet and windy morning in west London, but the group getting out of a minibus in the car park of Syon House are brimming with excitement.

As well as a tour of the historic house the group will also visit its aquatic and butterfly centres, while the children are looking forward to the adventure playground.

It sounds like an everyday outing, but the 25 people in the group - members of a south London Pentecostal church - are taking part in a pilot project by the Historic Houses Association (HHA) and the Black Environment Network (BEN).

BEN aims to encourage participation of ethnic communities in the built and natural environment and with HHA is running a series of visits to heritage sites for people from traditionally excluded communities.

Frances Garnham of the HHA says the project follows research showing that people from black and minority ethnic groups were seriously under-represented among visitors to historic sites.

"The idea is to try to reach out to communities who traditionally for one reason or another haven't participated in the historic environment before," she said.

Other outings have included members of the Edinburgh's Chinese community visiting Drumlanrig Castle in Dumfries and Bengali, Bangladeshi and Pakistani students from a Birmingham college exploring Tissington Hall in Derbyshire.

'Relevance'

The Syon House visit starts with shrieks from the children - and some of the adults - as they are introduced to animals ranging from locusts to snakes in the aquatic centre.

Before they venture up to the main house group co-ordinator Junie Joseph gives the kids a pep talk, stressing the need not to touch the valuable artefacts they'll be seeing.

But they're all well-behaved during the one-hour tour and eager to show off their knowledge of history to the guide.

Ms Joseph said she was encouraged by the group's reactions.
"They've really had a good time. The tour we had of the house was scheduled for 30 minutes but it lasted more than an hour because questions were being asked and people were so interested," she said.

Initially reaction to the idea of a visit to a stately home, particularly from the children, had been less than enthusiastic, she added.

"Maybe that's because it seems very English and very remote from our culture. But the fact that we're in England means we should be able to access pieces of its history," she said.

'Interesting'

That was a view other members of the group, such as Molly Perrineau, shared.

"I think black, white, whatever, you tend to be interested in history. It might not be directly our own history but it's interesting to know about the history of where the people governing you are from," she said.

Another of the group, Linford Anderson, thought visiting properties such as Syon House would help members of ethnic minorities better understand the culture of the indigenous population.

The Syon House visit is the last in the HHA/BEN project.

However, Frances Garnham of the HHA hopes the Department of Culture's recently-adopted policy to improve access to heritage sites will result in funding to safeguard similar ventures in the future.

"The HHA has funded this series of pilots, we're now going to be looking to the Heritage Lottery Fund to widen this project next year and to connect more communities and involve more places."

Ms Garnham said they hoped that in the future they would be able to connect people with the historic environment in a more meaningful way.

"That might be by introducing young people to conservation and archaeology and heritage perhaps doing vocational training.

"Or by encouraging people to volunteer or become involved in management committees so they've got an active role to play in what, at the end of the day, is often their local resource."

Story from BBC NEWS:
http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/uk/3228461.stm

Published: 2003/10/31 10:36:06 GMT

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Appendix 7 - BEN guidelines for working with the media

Working with the Media and Ethnic Minority Groups
Black Environment Network - December ’03

Working with the media, nationally and locally is an important part of engaging with ethnic minority groups. When working with ethnic minority groups, one must be aware that there are many vulnerable groups and individuals who maybe sensitive to public exposure. Steps must be taken to protect their interests and to therefore ensure an ongoing positive relationship with them.

1. Identifying sympathetic media personnel
When reading newspapers, magazines and viewing different media, take note of sympathetic presentations of ethnic minorities by the media, and make contact with relevant personnel to develop a working relationship which you can use on appropriate occasions. Consult local ethnic minority groups to tap into their connections and their views of media, especially locally.

2. Identifying opportunities
Look at your programme of work and activities and identify if there are opportunities to publicise aspects of it which are of particular interest to ethnic minority groups. Consult relevant groups to talk about your ideas and the opportunities you have spotted. Ask them for their views and assistance, e.g. you may get a first visit by a group of young children and their parents and there is for example a falconry display. Talk to the group leader to see if he or she can talk to particular parents to get their permission for their children to be photographed, with the aim of putting the photo into local organisations’ newsletters.

3. Making a decision on media presence
a. A group may be vulnerable and not wish to have the presence of the media. Sometimes a group may make the wrong decision about itself, and the final decision should also include the judgement of the organising organisation, e.g. BEN or HHA, assessing whether their presence might be detrimental to the process of engagement which it wishes to happen.

b. The suggestion may be varied to give the group choices in how they engage with the media, e.g. instead of a constant presence throughout the activities, it may be arranged that the journalist or photographer is present only at the end of the visit so that the process of engagement is not interrupted.

c. The organising organisation should be present, and at their discretion stop inappropriate questions. Only particular more confident members of the group will answer questions or pose for photos. Not all of them need to do it.

4. Briefing community groups
Talk to their representative about:

a. the purpose for the media presence, e.g. to promote the project to other organisations and community groups, and that their consent to share their experience is a contribution to the opening up of activities to others.

b. how and where the photos will be used, one-off or to be used again in the future. Children under 16 need their parents to consent to use of photos.

c. whether they want their details as a group published. Sometimes groups prefer to be anonymous so they cannot be identified by location. Other groups see acknowledgement of group name etc. as a kind of recognition of their input.

d. the fact that they do not have to answer questions they are unhappy about, that they can designate only particular members of the group to answer questions or have photos taken. They can stop any of the media activities at any time if they are unhappy about it.
e. they can comment on the setting or the way photographers want to pose them and have their input as to what they want and see as important to show.

f. whether he or she has actually consulted the people to be involved. The community group must be happy about the arrangements you wish to make.

g. the details of the arrangement. Times and dates must be written down. Even if it is given over the phone, you must write to re-confirm. If you are making efforts towards an arrangement such as a photo opportunity, you must double check that they will be turning up in the right place at the right time.

3. Briefing journalists and photographers etc.
   a. Photos which are portrait-like are not acceptable. Groups should never look straight into the camera. The focus must be the activity. Focus on settings which point to issues or subject matter which are important to highlight.

   b. Brief them on the purpose of the project and get them on side to assist us in getting the right messages across. Give them a written brief outline of the aims of the project and the process we are taking the organisations and groups through. Include any notes on particular cultural sensitivities in relation to different ethnic groups.

   c. If there is time, the community groups would like to see and comment on the text and photos.

   d. Ask for copies of whatever is published.

4. Dealing with problems
   Whatever you do, sometimes there will be unforeseen upsets and problems. Remember that if you have an ongoing positive relationship with an ethnic group, things can always be sorted out. Groups understand that it is not possible to know everything - mistakes may be made on either side and everyone will learn for the future. Groups can get it wrong too, e.g. they may get dates or times wrong and not turn up when you have made great efforts to arrange for a photo opportunity.

   When dealing with problems:

   a. arrange to see them face to face. Do not try to sort things out from a distance.

   b. agree any remedial steps, listening carefully to their wishes and checking back that you have understood what they have expressed correctly. e.g. there may be an apology in a local newsletter, or a letter written directly to the offended party by someone high up in your own organisation.

   c. continue to work with the group, making regular contact like you always have. Do not shy away because there has been a problem. Look to the future.

   d. realise that sometimes problems arise because we simply cannot control what happens with the media altogether. And, even sympathetic media personnel can also get it wrong. They may not have time to always check back before their own tight deadlines. In such cases it is important to empathise with the ethnic community group, showing clearly that you understand what has happened and that you are on their side. Do what you can, e.g. contact the media personnel who have caused the problem and explain clearly what has happened. Try to get them to write to apologise even if no more can be done. Often, sympathetic media people who have made a mistake will try harder to do something to support ethnic minority groups. It may result in more publicity.

5. Last of all - make it all fun!
   Everyone likes good publicity that celebrates their presence, their culture or their contribution, or which gives new information and promotes opportunities to be involved. It is fun for ethnic minority groups to work with the media when everything goes well. It is the way it should be.
Acknowledgements and Thank Yous

Our most sincere thanks to everyone involved! This pilot project has drawn on the diverse strengths, expertise, and resources of the individuals and organisations brought together by this initiative. Without the enthusiasm and commitment of everyone listed here, this groundbreaking work could not have taken place.

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Historic Houses
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England: Arley Hall, Tissington Hall, Syon Park

Wales: Margam Park, Tredegar House

Scotland: Drumlainrig Castle, Kelburn Castle, Traquair House

Ethnic Community Groups
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Wales: Minority Ethnic Women’s Network Wales

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