



MENDIP AONB FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS



INTRODUCTION:

The original brief for this project was "Encourage inner city families with small children and ethnic minorities to explore the countryside near to where they live".

It was agreed that as an initial phase it would be essential to gain an understanding of this target segment through the usage of Focus Groups.

Halo Media commissioned Greenmarker to undertake 2 focus groups for respondents within the Bristol area - this would generate information to assist the development and roll out of the later phases of the project.

FOCUS GROUPS:

Two focus groups were duly conducted on 18th October 2007 among inner city residents of Bristol. All respondents were parents of children under sixteen years of age. Collectively the groups comprised of seventeen people, of whom eleven were of ethnic minorities.

The findings of the two groups are illustrative and to ensure a greater statistical reliability greater numbers would be required to give definitive conclusions. However the findings do highlight clear shortcomings in specific areas that can be addressed in the development and ultimately the delivery of the campaign messaging.

The quotations in this document have been precisely transcribed from the respondents to maintain the integrity of their beliefs.

LET'S TALK ABOUT THE AREA YOU CALL 'HOME':

Most respondents came from Easton. They have seen the area become overcrowded and more run down over the past 10 - 15 years. However they commented positively on it being a truly multicultural society with shops for all nationalities and ease of transport.

- * "It's a lot more crowded than it used to be...not very clean"
- * "It has got a lot more congested and dirty over the years."
- * "When I go back to Horfield, I notice the quietness of it...lacks all the buzz"
- * "It was very quiet up there."
- * "There's not many places where you can buy... like Caribbean food.. but in Easton you can. They got everything you want."
- * "I got family in Shirehampton and everyone has to come to Easton or St Pauls to buy certain food."
- * "I would be nervous to go to Easton in case something happened to me. There's nowhere anywhere safe."
- * "There's certain areas that have got a name for themselvesright or wrong. Like St Pauls and that. But if you go there you'll see so many different cultures."
- * "You see black kids, white kids, Pakistani even Somali...they all blend together."
- * "If you don't know someone's religion or culture, it can cause pressure."
- * "If people are friendly, you lose the colour of their skin. The barriers are built by people being unfriendly."
- * "The good, there's the motorway, the kids have got loads to do and there are some really nice parks round where we live."



- * "When I moved to Easton there ain't a night goes by without police sirens...the helicopters have calmed down a bit now."
- * "The good thing about Easton is its multicultural. There's access to what you want."
- * "We got Indian shops everything."
- * "All the houses and all the shops have rented out..more people and more rubbish."
- * "There's a no mans land, there's a retail park and there's also a green area."
- * "In my road it's a cul-de-sac and if anyone has a "bit of a do" it turns into a street party. Everyone looks after each others kids."
- * Westbury: "I live in a cul-de-sac. There's a lot of old people in my road and I feel quite safe..I can leave the front door open when I go outside and I could not do that in Easton. I moved out to Westbury for a better life style. There's a lot for children to do and good parks."
- * Ashley Down. "I live on a busy road and there is no sense of community. Every time I go anywhere I go in the car so I don't meet anyone."
- * Fishponds. "A good place, we can get to everywhere from there. ..we got loads of shops."

HOW FAR DOES YOUR HOME PATCH EXTEND?

Whilst some respondents had a sense of belonging to Bristol, the majority felt they belonged to a much more localised area stretching for only about 1/2mile radius of their home. The half mile radius moves with them when they move house and they retain their sense of belonging to the old area as well as the new.

- * "Staple Hill is as far as I go."
- * "Half a mile around me is my patch. Yeah half a mile about that."
- * "I was brought up in St Andrews, then Horfield then I moved to Easton so I know them all."
- * "I would not regard Fishponds as my home but it is my familiar surroundings now but I was born in Bradley Stoke."
- * "Four or five streets and its no longer home."
- * "My area of comfort was literally my road and the walk to the pub but once I started jogging round the area, I got quite a good idea of the surrounding area and my area of comfort was expanded."

DO YOU FEEL THE COUNTRYSIDE IS PART OF YOUR HOME?

There was a unanimous feeling from the first group and from the majority of the second group (3/9) that the Countryside was not included in their "home area"

The majority felt that the countryside started four or five miles outside of Bristol however for a significant minority, the countryside means the fields either side of the M32 and others refer to the Clifton Downs as 'the countryside.'

- * "Countryside starts at the backend of Whitchurch and Bristol Airport. Quite away really."
- * "Anything in BS40 is countryside."
- * "Countryside starts at Clifton."
- * "The boundary is Clifton Suspension Bridge, Airport, Bishopsworth, Whitchurch, Yate, Westbury-on-Trym, and Shirehampton."



- * "Westbury-on-Trym is like the countryside, because they got the park, gardens they got houses, not like Easton. They got room. You feel nice."
- * "Bristol is a beautiful place because you can go four or five miles in any direction and you get the scenery, you get the grass."
- * "As soon as you get out of Bristol you got the scenery and I associate greenery with countryside.... from Brislington onwards."
- * "I would say that Clifton is country. Its green and its large."
- * "I think Stapleton is quite country. Its quite green either side of the M32."
- * "Wherever you are in Easton or Eastville you can walk straight out into the country from there."

WOULD YOU FEEL AT HOME IN THE COUNTRYSIDE?

Most respondents could fantasize about living in the country however only a very few would actually wish to live there. Their main reason for wishing to remain in the inner city was for the children who they thought would not know what to do in the countryside.

- * "Not really, I'm more of a city person. Wouldn't feel comfortable."
- * "I like to live here in the city with the shopping."
- * "I wouldn't mind. Nice peaceful with the air no dust. I hate traffic I like my peaceful life."
- * "I can come once a week (to Bristol) if I want."
- * "If I had the money and the property became available near Bristol airport I'd take it. You would have your own lane and a few acres I'd feel at peace straight away
- * But if you got kids, you got them two steps away from the rest of society."
- * "I'd go to the country but the children need city life until they are old enough"
- * "You hear of children brought up in Cornwall who find it very hard to get jobs. That would be my concern."
- * "I'd like the quiet but I wouldn't like the rest of it". (No ethnic shops)
- * "Because I'm black there would be no food shops for me, I'd have to come back to civilisation."
- * "My kids need to be able to get to places. They need to be able to get on buses and walk to places so I would not move to the countryside."
- * "I wouldn't like it (in the country) you can't hear anyone shouting or swearing."
- * "I do like the solitude and quietness of the countryside but my kids would hate it."
- * "It's my dream to have a couple of horses running around out in the sticks."

HAVE YOU HEARD OF THE TERM 'WORLD HERITAGE SITE'?

5 out of 17 had heard of the term 'World Heritage Site'. This figure might mislead as having heard of something and actually knowing what it means are 2 separate issues.

- * "Is it something like green belt..? Like an area you are not allowed to build on."
- * "No I haven't heard of the expression."



HAVE YOU HEARD OF THE TERM 'AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY'?

15 out of 17 had heard of the term 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty'. This figure might mislead as having heard of something and actually knowing what it means are 2 separate issues.

* "Means Protected, something that's really beautiful."

When asked to think of an example, Cheddar Gorge, Westonbirt Arboretum and Glastonbury were mentioned.

LETS TALK ABOUT HILLS:

When asked to name ranges of hills only one respondent mentioned the Mendips.

None of the respondents spontaneously mentioned Quantocks / Blackdowns / Brendons/ Polden

Most respondents could only think of roads, e.g. "Golden Hill" and "Black Boy Hill"

When prompted, five out of eight in the first group had heard of the Mendip Hills but none knew where it was or had been there. (It later transpired that one may have visited the Mendips on a school trip many years ago)

When asked if they knew where the Mendip Hills were, none of the first group and five out of nine in the second group answered correctly

In the second group six out of nine had been to the Mendips. They had all driven there in their own transport. All six respondents who had visited the Mendips got out of their cars on arrival and walked.

Respondents were given a map and asked to mark the position of the Mendip Hills.

* "Oh my lord, I'm just going to have to close my eyes and guess"

* "I think it's near Bath."

* "It's such a guess."

* "I went there when I was younger to the Mendip Hills. I think it is near Devizes but I'm not sure."

* "It's a bit of a joke to say that you have lived in the area for forty years and you don't know where the Mendip Hills are. I feel quite embarrassed to say that but its true."

Once the respondents were shown where the Mendips actually are (on a map) a few respondents said they had been near-by. "I've been to Chew Valley" but none (in the first group) had ventured beyond and up onto the hills.

One respondent asked seriously "They haven't got Sugarloaf Mountain there have they?"

When told that The Mendips have been officially designated as an 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' there was genuine interest and surprise.

"We used to talk about it quite a lot when we was younger I can remember being on the hill at some stage and rolling down part of it and they were showing us stuff like quarries basically it was like a school trip but it was a long time ago and I couldn't remember how to get there now."

One respondent did not appear to appreciate that the Mendips are part of the historical permanent landscape and asked "How long have they been there"

Others asked:



- * "Is it sign posted. ...how are you aware that you are in the Mendip hills?"
- * "I think I've actually been there but not known it was the Mendip Hills."
- * "Can you park there? It's a big thing when you are thinking about going somewhere ...Parking."
- * "We're not going to go there if we can't park."
- * "Is there a specific area which is more interesting than another or is it generally (all) interesting?"

WHAT DO YOU THINK THE MENDIP HILLS ARE LIKE?

There was no awareness of any old mine workings, Caves (one person) and no knowledge of any country pubs other than in Blagdon and the Chew Valley and the airport road Pubs.

WHEN YOU VISITED THE MENDIPS (6 OF 17) WHAT DID YOU DO?

- * "We walked around and had a little picnic. I don't like long journeys and it's not too far. Nine times out of ten you put a kid in a car and they fall asleep and when you get there they are still asleep."
- * "My favourite day on the Mendips was turn up at the pub, have a swift pint jump on the bike and slogged it to the top and take 20 minutes to bomb it back down the hill."
- * "Rather than fairground rides and things like that I like to take the kids out to where they can get fresh air, have a nice bite to eat."
- * "We went walking. I went down a cave years ago."

WHAT IS GOOD ABOUT THE MENDIPS?

- * "Fresh air. No pollution you can breathe."
- * "If you go like that (Put your arms out) it's just beautiful. It's a sense of like freedom."
- * "A nice feeling with lots of space."
- * "Stress free."
- * "No cars"
- * "No Traffic wardens"
- * "Slow"
- * "You can waste time without feeling guilty"
- * "In the inner city you feel you've got to do thousands of things you think, I've got to do this and I've got to do that. You can just waste time (In the country). without thinking."
- * "It's nice just to have the kids around you and you are doing nothing."
- * "When I do something with my daughter in the city everything costs such a lot, even if it's just a cup of tea, whereas if you drive out and you pay for petrol, after that, it's free."
- * "If you are in the city you are guaranteed to end up in some kind of a restaurant but if you go out for the day and you've got children you



can take some drinks and sandwiches and some fruit.”

- * “It’s nice for children to be able to recognise different trees, they might see the odd squirrel, and you don’t see that in Easton.”
- * “If you take the children out they are bound to see some wildlife.”
- * “If you’ve got a little bit of knowledge you can say that’s an acorn and the squirrels eat them. It’s interesting to teach children where things come from.”

WHAT IS BAD ABOUT THE MENDIPS?

- * “I’m not being horrible but why would I want to go there. There’s nothing there.”
- * “I’d feel like I wanted a longer trip so I feel I’m getting out of Bristol. It does not really appeal to me.”
- * “It can’t be all just ‘Mendips’ got to have some sort of substance. Something there to go to”

Four people out of nine in the second group expressed nervousness about cows and other animals. (This question was not asked in the first group but it is anticipated that owing to their overall level of basic ignorance, encounters with animals would also cause concern among these respondents.)

- * “Being chased by cows”
- * “I do actually think that if I’m on a footpath and there’s a bull, that’s terrifying. You have to run across the fields.”
- * “I don’t think I would walk across a field with cows in it.”
- * “We’re not going to get mowed down by some horses or anything are we!”
- * “It’s not to say that we wouldn’t go. I suppose you could be cautious or get shot.”

WHAT WOULD YOU EXPECT TO FIND ON THE MENDIPS?

One person was aware of mines. Only 3 people were aware of the nice pubs on the Mendips however these were in Blagdon and Chew Valley rather than Priddy.

- * “Fresh air, big quiet, nobody watching you.”
- * “Barns”, “Orchards”, “Strawberries”, “Forests”
- * “They are quite barren and wind swept, the other side of it is the greenery and the trees.”
- * “I like to go with the flow. If we end up in a countryside pub we do that, or if we want to go for a walk we do that or if we’ve got the bikes we do that.”
- * “The nice thing is that if you live in the inner city and you know you are going to go to Super Bowl, you know exactly what’s there but in the countryside you don’t know what you are going to end up doing.”

POSITIONING STATEMENTS

Do you agree or disagree with the following?

- * “The Mendips are there for me and my family to enjoy”



- * "The Mendips are an area of outstanding natural beauty"
- * "The Mendips are not for city people like me"
- * "The Mendips are for the rich and hunting shooting fishing people"

Although only six respondents had actually visited the Mendips there was a general consensus that the first and second statements relating to family enjoyment and the beauty of the area were most fitting.

And all disagreed with the comments:

- * "The Mendips are not for city people like me"
- * "The Mendips are for the rich and hunting shooting fishing people"
- * "That's somebody very narrow minded made that comment" (Above Statement)

WHAT WOULD INCREASE THE LIKELIHOOD OF VISITING?

Having been told that the Mendips are an 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' and had the location confirmed, respondents were asked what would make them more likely to visit.

There was general acceptance that they would like to see a "Lodge" where they could obtain information on walks and things to see and get some history of the Mendip Hills.

- * "A cafe and a nice tea bar. That would be good"
- * "Nice restaurants anything."
- * "Children like to come there and enjoying themselves."
- * "Children have to learn where is the beauty so we can take them 'cos we don't know, so now we can tell them good these things. There is a restaurant there is a pub they can bring their friends. They can go for the days like in the summer."
- * "Its for children and for us as well, for us to learn and to see the beauty what its like."
- * "If the children are happy then the parents are happy there should be something for the children."
- * "The children are having a good time and they are safe."
- * "I'd like to see a free bus service that took people up there .. every hour."

When asked what the children would like there was split response approx half the respondents said they would like an adventure play area, like Victoria Park in Bath however others were concerned that a children's play area would detract from the natural beauty of the Mendips.

- * "I don't think we should commercialise too much ...just a café. If you start putting play areas then it's going to stop being the Mendip Hills. It's going to be completely ruined."
- * "When we were kids we did not have it all like this, we used to go running up and down the dunes. If you give the child a spark of imagination they will find something to play anyway."

A WEEKEND STAY:

There was a feeling from some respondents that even though the Mendips are only a few miles away it was sufficiently far for them to want



to stay for the weekend.

- * "I think I'd like some caravans as well to stay there. Just to visit for the weekend for a couple of nights."
- * "Just sometime off from your home and your family commitments and responsibilities."
- * "Just to have some time off. It's more relaxing away from all your worries. It could be a nice place to go to."

PROPOSITIONAL STATEMENTS

Respondents were asked which of the following statements would be most likely to appeal to them and be most likely to motivate them to visit the Mendips:

- * "Fantastic walks through hills and forests"
- * "Terrific country pubs"
- * "Place for the family to enjoy together"
- * "Outdoor activities e.g. climbing, cycling and caving"
- * "Great for a childrens' nature walk"
- * "Interesting old mining areas"

There was unanimous agreement from both groups that the statement "A place for the family to enjoy together" would be the most motivating and appealing concept.

When asked what they could envisage their family doing, they said:

- * "Running, hiding without worrying about running in front of a car."
- * "Playing with the children..., picnic."

WHERE WOULD RESPONDENTS EXPECT TO FIND INFORMATION ON THE MENDIPS?

Respondents were asked where they would expect to find out about the Mendips.

- * "Leaflets from the supermarket and pubs, advertisements in Venue magazine."
- * "Primary Times."
- * "From the children's schools and the library and meeting places like leisure centres."
- * "Bus station"
- * "Advertise within the community as well as on the internet."
- * "You could put a sign up (on the Mendips) saying Mendips an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty".

If doing an advertising campaign what would you say?

- * "Freedom"



- * "Fresh Air"
- * "Fun"
- * "Knowledge"
- * "Fantastic Walks"
- * "If you haven't been there you might think the Mendips, that's miles away".

SUMMARY:

The first point that emerged was that many peoples perception of home is a great influencer of how they perceive everything that surrounds their 'home'.

A genuine lack of knowledge existed of what exists past their territory - this could inform the campaign to take an educational route as this does appear to be a hurdle in getting visitors to go to the Mendips or even leave their 'home'. With this lack of knowledge comes uncertainty - the knock on effect of this is that people become scared to try/go somewhere new.

The second point was that people don't seem to know what they could do once they are in the countryside - respondents knew that you could go walking - one person raised the issue of parking which is a key urban issue that will effect their decision to travel somewhere.

The third and most important point is a geographical one. Where are the Mendips? For some it is an easy place to identify but it appears from the focus group survey that many people do not know what exists on their countryside doorstep.

In defence of the respondents local geography isn't necessarily on the national curriculum - it is presumed that people will acquire their local knowledge through exploration and in many cases this simply doesn't happen for a multitude of reasons as has been highlighted in the responses.

THE 'POSITIONING AND PROPOSITIONAL' STATEMENTS

The responses gained from these have left clear messaging routes open to us. There was a definitive agreement by the respondents in the positioning statements section - the six who had visited and those who hadn't all agreed on the same 2 which were 'The Mendips are there for me and my family to enjoy' and 'The Mendips are an area of outstanding beauty'

We also discover that the perception of 'The Mendips are not for city people like me' and 'The Mendips are for the rich and hunting shooting fishing people' are completely wrong from the respondents. These questions were pitched to them as statements that had arisen from previous Focus Groups, but they were strongly challenged as 'narrow minded statements'. This is a real positive that these beliefs do not exist as it would prove a complex challenge to dispel these.

The propositional statements delivered agreement on one key message - 'A place for the family to enjoy together'.

THE NEXT PHASE:

In essence - tell them where it is, how to get there and what they can do when they are there.

Messaging:



- * Freedom
- * Fresh Air
- * Location location location
- * Knowledge
- * Walks

DESIGN:

- * Leaflets + Leaflet Stand
- * Adshells, Billboards (local positions)
- * A3 Posters - Community Centres + Leisure Centres + Libraries + Supermarkets/Corner Shops

If you would like to talk through any of the findings please feel free to get in contact with Rich ([0117 970 6441](tel:01179706441)), we would also welcome the opportunity to meet up and discuss the roll out of the next phase of the project.

