

**Title - Sustainable Access to Leisure Sites and Amenities (SALSA)**

**Keywords** - Sustainable Development

**Name** - Graham Berridge

**School / Department** - School of Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure

**Institution** - Thames Valley University

**Group** - Final year BA (Hons) Leisure Management

**Activity** - This example is taken from a module in Leisure Planning Policy and Development at Thames Valley University. It incorporates a lecture and tutorial session, the use of a guest speaker, a site visit and a final assessment.

**Aim**

1. To consider the potential impact of SALSA by drawing comparisons with typical planning approaches to leisure facilities.
2. To consider how 'planning for real' exercises incorporated into SALSA may result in leisure facilities being built in the future that are both more accessible and sustainable.
3. To analyse if such developments can affect changes in participation patterns, by making facilities more easily accessed by local communities through designated walk ways and cycle ways that are car free.
4. To complete an assessment analysing how leisure sites in general are planned and located from a safe access point of view.

**Context / Background** - This set of learning activities was developed as part of ongoing links with the Local Authority, which had already contributed to the final year Leisure Planning and Policy module. Once funding for the SALSA project was secured and implemented, all parties felt it would make an effective teaching, learning and assessment exercise and an example of a sustainable approach to leisure access.

The London Borough of Ealing was addressing the issue of mobility and participation in leisure amongst children. Their own research conducted previously indicated that a high percentage of car usage was for leisure travel and that a high proportion of that travel was parents taking their children to leisure sites. The research also showed that parental fears regarding safety restricted children's independent mobility (to walk or cycle to leisure sites). Therefore, children were becoming more reliant on their parents to transport them to their leisure activities.

The borough developed a policy that had two aims: it sought to encourage more mobility amongst children and attempted to reduce the number of car journeys made for leisure. The planning policy for the borough stipulated that

new developments could only have a maximum of 50 car parking spaces in the central town zone. As a result, a well-known brand of fitness clubs had a planning application rejected because it required 400 car park spaces, and indicated that approximately 85% of all its users arrived by car. Although effective for new developments, this policy did not affect existing leisure sites.

So the SALSA project was devised to link key existing leisure sites by safe routes either for cycling or walking, and was supported by a programme of community consultation resulting in a network of uniform signage, route maps, advocate sessions in schools, safe lockers and cycle storage.

### **Example**

The following elements are included within the part of the module that refers to SALSA:

- A lecture on sustainable development and the National Cycling Strategy
- A lecture/tutorial with by Paul Hyman, the Leisure Officer responsible for developing the project, on the funding, implementing and research of SALSA
- A final module assessment

As part of the Leisure Planning Policy and Development Module, students consider the SALSA project in the context of approaches and initiatives for leisure planning in general. The module covers the following in the context of planning: concepts and background; leisure and urban regeneration; design; approaches for leisure; standards for facilities; provision for sport and recreation; formulating regional leisure plans; leisure complexes; stadia; sustainable leisure.

Session one introduces the students to the concept of sustainability and leisure, drawing on examples for stadia planning and access, amongst others. Attention is also drawn to the idea of how leisure and transport are related and the need for most new facilities to have to accommodate car travel. The National Cycling Strategy is introduced as a plan to promote less car travel (in all aspects of life, not just for leisure).

Session two is presented with Paul Hyman, who was responsible for the SALSA project. He outlines how the idea was generated from a number of concerns within the local authority. The two key issues were seen to be: 1) the increase in vehicle congestion in the borough, and 2) the increase in the 'couch potato' syndrome amongst children identified in a health education authority report (i.e. increased lack of mobility and participation). In an attempt to deal with these problems, Paul had looked at research into how children are transported and the implications for this in terms of their mobility and participation in leisure.

A key element in the presentation is to convey the full history of the funding for the SALSA project and to offer a visual narrative of how the project was setup, implemented and monitored. This requires collation of all materials on the project, particularly those relating to the 'real planning' exercise. This was the period of consultation with residents to identify the linked sites and to establish ways in which parental fears over safety could be assuaged. The result was a co-ordinated approach to site selection, routes, signage and support.

Another key feature of the teaching and learning for this exercise was the site visits: all students either walked or rode along the linked networks to see how the SALSA plans had been put into practice. They were asked to report back on this during the following tutorial.

### **Assessment**

The students then have to complete a final summative assessment, weighted at 70% of their module mark. This assessment is based upon the London Borough of Ealing's SALSA Project's concerns regarding location of leisure facilities and the access networks available. It can be applied to other London boroughs and for the purpose of the assessment, each student was allocated one Greater London Borough.

#### *Task:*

*A) Complete a thorough audit of the access and transport routes to Sports and Leisure Centres in the borough. This should include the geographic location of the centres and include recording of the following access routes:*

- 1) Bus routes (nearest to within 500 yards of the centre)*
- 2) Train lines (nearest to centre)*
- 3) Undergrounds (nearest to centre)*
- 4) Pedestrian crossings and footpaths (immediately around/outside the centre)*
- 5) Cycle paths and racks (immediately outside the centre)*
- 6) Car parking space and layout (number of spaces, parking fee, layout with or without footpaths)*

*The access routes should be mapped and listed for each centre. If none of the access routes are present simply list '0 or none'.*

*B) In conclusion, critically comment upon the access routes stating to what extent the sites are accessible through transport other than a car and comment on whether or not the facilities have been well planned from an access point of view and the implications this has for participation. Classify the access routes in terms of their relative safeness in the context of ideas on safety addressed by the SALSA project.*

**Results / Feedback** - Students were enlightened by the example as it drew their attention to some complex relationships regarding leisure participation. Walking or cycling on the SALSA network was highly beneficial as the students were able to see directly how the project operated. The feedback in a follow-up tutorial session helped to develop a wider understanding of the problems associated with such an approach. Once the assessment audit had been completed, the general view was one of astonishment that so many leisure sites were poorly located and safe access was often ill thought out, unless it was for car travel.

Learning through this activity was seen as highly effective, as measured through module feedback and assessment grades, with students producing very competent and substantial reports.

The example met its aims and generated positive feedback from the students, the borough and the external examiner.

**Further Information** - [graham.berridge@tvu.ac.uk](mailto:graham.berridge@tvu.ac.uk)