



FOREST OF BOWLAND

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

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View from the Chair



View from the Chair:

County Councillor Albert Atkinson, Chairman of the Forest of Bowland AONB Joint Advisory Committee

A quick hurtle through some highlights of the last year must start with the fantastic news we received in late October from the Heritage Lottery Fund, of their approval of the AONB Partnership's stage 1 funding bid for just over £2million to develop and deliver the Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership. This exciting programme of activity will look to re-connect people with their landscape and their past, to safeguard the area's wildlife and heritage and to improve people's access to this popular countryside area. As a resident of the Pendle Hill area, I am particularly looking forward to hearing how the programme develops over the coming year.

This excellent news was quickly followed in December by a welcome announcement from Government that Defra funding to AONB Partnerships, Conservation Boards and National Parks would be protected up to 2019/20. This announcement clearly emphasises the importance Government places on Protected Landscapes and I believe was also recognition of the fantastic work being delivered by AONB Partnerships across England. The funding settlement provides much needed stability for the Partnership going forward and helps us to look at how we can maximise new income generation opportunities in future.

The AONB Partnership also continues to think big with habitat restoration projects on-going and in development to safeguard and restore blanket bog and upland hay meadow habitats. Despite the Pennine Peat LIFE funding application for EU LIFE+ being unsuccessful, restoration works took place during the winter and early spring at Brown Syke and Hawthornthwaite Fell on Abbeystead estate. Plans are afoot to have one last attempt to persuade the Commission to award funding to Pennine Peat LIFE project. We wait with bated breath!

The Bowland Haytime and Networks for Nectar projects had a very successful season in 2015, with almost 27 hectares of precious meadow restored or enhanced. I'm pleased to report that funding was also secured from Lancashire Environmental Fund and Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust to support a further phase of these projects to May 2017.

These are just a few observations of all the great work done by our AONB partners and the team in Dunsop Bridge, so please take some time to glance through the rest of this report to find out more!

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'A. Atkinson'.

AONB Officer's View



Back to the Land

I'm pleased to be able to report that in recent years we have seen increasing involvement of farmers and land managers in AONB Partnership projects and activity. Back in 2012, the AONB established the 'Bowland Land Managers Forum' to re-establish strong links between land managers and the work of the Partnership. Since this time, relationships have developed to a position where farmers and landowners are now leading or are directly involved in many aspects of our work.

Important blanket bog restoration continues to go from strength to strength, with the AONB unit working closely with moorland owners and managers, the Environment Agency, United Utilities, Natural England and Pennine Peat Partnership to improve this internationally important habitat. And Bowland Haytime is now entering its fifth season helping farmers and smallholders to restore and manage the AONB's precious upland hay meadows.

Farming representatives from Bowland have also stepped forward to assist in the design and testing of a pioneering agri-environment scheme being led by the Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Partnership. This is a very exciting development which could have a far-reaching influence on government policy and the future design and implementation of agri-environment schemes locally and nationally. This is backed up with the recent establishment of the 'Northern Hill Farmers Panel', a farmer-led initiative which will seek to address some of the challenges faced by those that farm the northern uplands of England. The panel, which includes Bowland farming representatives, will seek early discussions with Government ministers and officials on how they can help foster a more sustainable future for farming in the northern uplands.

Other developments brewing over the last year include the establishment of a Pendle Hill Farmers Network to guide and support the development of the Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership and a project to restore Black grouse to the Bowland Fells. Exciting times ahead!

Lastly, sincere thanks must again go to all the wonderful people we have the pleasure in working with to help conserve and enhance our outstanding landscape. You all know who you are!

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Natural & Cultural Heritage



Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership Scheme

In the autumn of 2015 the AONB was delighted be informed that our bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for £2 million for the Pendle Hill landscape partnership scheme had been approved.

As the national announcement was made on 31st October, HLF decided to use Pendle Hill as the lead press story and focus on our 'witchy' heritage. Our ambitious plans for the scheme are to reconnect people with their landscapes and their past on both sides of our iconic Pendle Hill.

Projects will restore and link up wildlife habitats; understand and explore our geology, built heritage and archaeology; improve access and the tourism offer; engage with new audiences; provide opportunity for learning, training and volunteering; explore the value of the area to our health and wellbeing; and re tell the stories of the distinctive places and radical people of Pendle – inspiring the young people of today.

Since the news broke the AONB have been putting together a plan to develop our ideas further; to consult with communities and visitors, and to draw together a funding package which will unlock the HLF monies. There's lots more to do before we submit our stage 2 bid in the autumn of 2017, and then we hope to start our four year programme of activity in spring 2018.

Pendle Hill from Worsaw Hill
© Forest of Bowland AONB

The Calder valley from the slopes of Pendle Hill
© Charlie Hedley

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Natural & Cultural Heritage

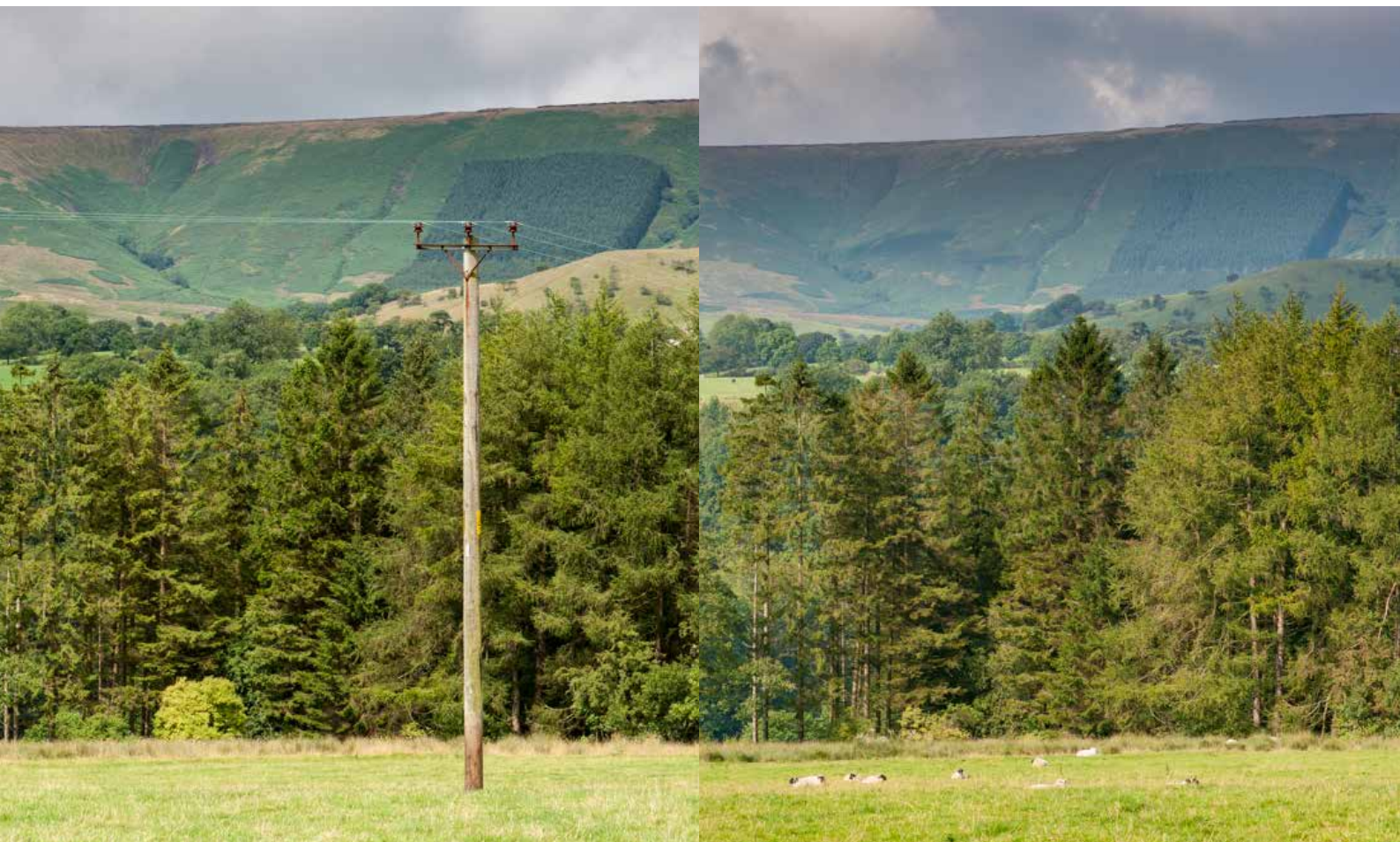
Undergrounding for Visual Amenity

As part of the 'Undergrounding for Visual Amenity' (UVA) programme, Electricity North West Ltd. (ENWL) continues to work with the Forest of Bowland AONB Unit to identify visually intrusive sections of overhead lines for undergrounding.

Work in 2015/16 has focused on identifying new undergrounding schemes to, ideally, fully commit the AONB's allocation of c. £1.8m for the current price review period (RIIO-ED1) from 2015 to 2023.

During autumn 2015, the AONB unit invited Parish Councils in the AONB to suggest potential schemes for inclusion in the programme. Several of those schemes suggested have been included alongside those identified by the AONB Unit and AONB partner organisations.

There are now 11 schemes currently in development in the Dunsop, Hodder and Lune valleys and in Bleasdale, Chipping and Twiston.



Before and after undergrounding work at Middle Lees near Whitewell
© Graham Cooper

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Natural & Cultural Heritage



RSPB Bowland Wader Project

The Bowland Wader Project is part of the RSPB's national Farm Advisory Focus Area programme. Here in Bowland we have been providing targeted advice since 2001 and over 180 farmers and land managers have taken on our guidance and support and more significantly, most of them acted on it.

Addressing farmland bird declines is becoming critical. Of the waders alone, Lapwing hit the red list in 2009 and Curlew has now followed it with Redshank, Snipe and Oystercatcher also of concern on the amber list. Curlew is now a major global conservation priority as, such is the rate of its population decline, it is now globally near threatened. Action is needed now in order to save the species. Bowland has a key role to play as Curlew numbers here remain good – farmland managed in a more traditional style providing key habitats for breeding Curlews. No amount of predator control can produce fledged Curlew chicks in landscapes where intensive silage meadow management predominates.

Over 85 farms with agri-environment agreements are currently working with the project and the new Countryside Stewardship Scheme will, hopefully, continue to provide funding to support this work. Recently, we have also been involved in development of a results based agri-environment scheme for breeding waders to be piloted in the English uplands, more on this in the future hopefully.

In the past twelve months Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier applications were submitted for three Bowland farms, with several more supported that were submitted by partner organisations, in particular the Ribble Rivers Trust who we continue to work with closely.

Two more farm events delivered by the Campaign for the Farmed Environment were supported locally and numerous opportunities for publicity and outreach as ever were grasped. Farm walks as part of Festival Bowland were popular again in Bleasdale and at Cobble Hey Farm and, this year, 360 school children were able to experience first-hand how livestock farming and wader conservation can work so well together.

Engaging the local community has always been at the core of what the Wader Project does and this year our volunteers gave over 195 hours of their time to survey 32 farms. Without them we wouldn't have the evidence that waders continue to fare better on farms that are in stewardship schemes and are receiving our regular support and advice. Do get in touch if you can help!

The now, globally, near threatened Curlew on wader scrape
at New Laithe Farm
© Gavin Thomas (RSPB)

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Natural & Cultural Heritage

Traditional Boundaries

Traditional boundaries, including hedges and dry stone walls, are a key feature of the Forest of Bowland landscape and maintaining them takes time and skill. Fortunately, the AONB's volunteer base for training courses in these areas is very encouraging, with people travelling the breadth of Bowland to take part. This interest is very important if these traditional skills are to be kept alive, and Bowland's landscape cared for, into the future.

During 2015/16 Lancashire Countryside Service and the AONB were involved in organising and delivering hedge laying training opportunities in Scorton, Bleasdale, Dolphinholme, Crook O'Lune Keasden and Grindleton, involving 25 volunteers in total.

In addition, the annual Forest of Bowland Hedgelaying Competition was again held in March - this year at Laneside Farm, West Bradford. Part of the Lancashire and Westmorland Hedge Laying Association's Grand Prix calendar, the event is organised by Lancashire County Council, Ribble Valley Borough Council and the AONB. In all, 20 competitors took part, with entrants signing up for one of three categories: Championship, Novice or Open. 198m of hedge were laid during the day and of note this year, six of the entrants were between the ages of 11 and 15 years. A good sign for the future!

For those wanting to try out their artistic skills, there was room for some creativity on the drystone walling days which took place during 2015. In August a substantial shelter, incorporating seating and windbreaks, was built close to the trig point on Fairsnape Fell. Volunteers and contractors alike certainly put a lot of effort into the new structure, having to walk to the summit and back each day!

A few kilometres to the south, volunteers helped to construct an interpretation feature with a difference at the base of Parlick Fell. Representing the top of a curved shepherd's crook, this new drystone shelter near Fell Foot incorporated both visitor information and one of the 25 "beauty" stones which originally appeared as part of the Bowland Revealed anniversary art project.



Volunteers and contractors with the newly laid hedge at Crook O'Lune
© Tarja Wilson

The finished shelter at Fairsnape Fell summit
© Tarja Wilson

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Natural & Cultural Heritage

Wyre Habitat Creation Scheme

The Wyre Habitat Creation Scheme (completed January 2016) delivered a number of projects which are intended to rejuvenate degraded riparian habitat in the Lower and Mid Wyre Catchment.

Riparian habitat was improved using fencing, tree planting and bank restoration works. The erection of fencing near watercourses prevented livestock from accessing the riparian zone. This is likely to lower the number of direct inputs of faecal matter thus lowering the numbers of faecal bacteria seen in watercourses and at the economically important bathing waters of the Fylde Coast. Fencing also prevents overgrazing of river banks, this will create ideal growing conditions for many species of plants. The increased plant cover will help stabilise banks, lowering the amount of fine sediment which enters watercourses. This will reduce turbidity in the watercourse and will therefore increase the number of faecal organisms which are killed by ultraviolet radiation from the sun. The “buffer zones” which result will also reduce the amount of diffuse pollution which enters watercourses, as surface flows of water which may contain faecal bacteria will be intercepted by the increased plant cover. Increases in terrestrial biodiversity will result, as flora and fauna will flourish in the ever improving habitat. Further to this, buffer zones will act as habitat corridors allowing terrestrial species to move across the Wyre Catchment.

The improving habitat will also support riverine species. In particular, migratory and non-migratory fish species such as Brown Trout (*Salmo trutta*), Sea Trout (*Salmo trutta morpha trutta*) and Atlantic Salmon (*Salmo salar*) will all benefit from improved water quality and cooler river temperatures that come as a result of the increased shade provided by newly planted trees.

The Wyre Habitat Creation Scheme was funded by the Catchment Wise initiative. Catchment Wise is a fund set up by United Utilities to help improve the health of the North West's rivers. So far, it has given almost £700,000 in seed-funding and grants to eleven new charitable partnerships, each led by a catchment host organisation, which bring communities together to tackle pollution in our rivers and streams.



Stream near Calder Vale before and after stock fencing
© Wyre Rivers Trust

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Natural & Cultural Heritage



Bowland Hen Harrier Project

The tale of hen harriers and peregrines on the United Utilities estate over the past two years is best illustrated by the short life of Highlander. Highlander was a female Hen Harrier that was born in 2014 in Bowland. She was one of five chicks to fledge from her nest, which was itself the first nest in Bowland for three years. Another four chicks successfully fledged from a second nest in 2014, giving some optimism to those who would like to see the full suite of upland birds thrive in Bowland once more.

As part of the RSPB's work to protect Hen Harriers, Highlander was one of the chicks that were fitted with a satellite tag. The optimism that had been generated by the season quickly disappeared however as two of the young satellite-tagged birds disappeared in unknown circumstances within a few hundred metres and a few days of each other on the northern side of Bowland.

Highlander returned to Bowland to breed in 2015 but her three nesting attempts all ended in failure. From seven nesting attempts that year only one chick survived to fledging. Highlander did return to Bowland again in 2016 and the people on one of the Festival of Bowland walks were lucky enough to see her quartering the valley where she was born. She did not linger in Bowland however. Her last transmission was from a grouse moor in north-east England. Another sudden disappearance that is very concerning, and the loss of another bird that is now perilously close to extinction as a breeding species in England.

It was not long ago that nine pairs of Peregrines attempted to nest on the United Utilities estate in Bowland. In 2016 in the Forest of Bowland all nesting attempts failed and for the first time in decades not a single chick fledged successfully.

The RSPB works with a wide variety of partners in Bowland and is very grateful for their support as well as to all the RSPB volunteers that put a huge amount of time, energy and dedication into monitoring birds of prey on the United Utilities estate.

Hen harriers Highlander (right) and Sky (left)
© RSPB

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Natural & Cultural Heritage

Biodiversity Delivery

This year, biodiversity delivery has focused on two ongoing important projects - species recovery and peat restoration.

The species recovery programme has concentrated on the globeflower project. Once again, seed was collected from three of the known sites around Stocks reservoir; and together with the tiny plants grown on from the previous year, have been looked after until the plug plants are big enough to be planted out at the chosen receptor site. This site has been chosen as it held a large population in the recent past, and so we felt held a good chance of being successful in the future, with some alterations to its grazing management.

Peat restoration projects continue to help to revegetate previously bare and eroding areas within the Bowland Fells SSSI. During the winter of 2015-16, using funding from the Environment Agency, landowners and the AONB Unit, a 40 ha patch of peatland at Brown Syke was limed and seeded. This builds on work undertaken as part of the agri-environment schemes, increasing the rate of vegetation recovery on the site.

The lime applications are crucial in order to increase the pH of the peat enough to allow the 'nurse' grass seed mix to germinate and establish. This in turn protects the bilberry, cotton grass and heather seedlings as they germinate and establish more slowly.

During the summer we had the disappointing news that our Peat restoration bid to the LIFE+ EU funding had been unsuccessful. However, we had a lot of very positive feedback from the assessors, and so we submitted another application to them.



Brown Syke re-profiling site visit
© Sarah Robinson

Globe flower seedlings sown in autumn 2015
© Sarah Robinson

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Natural & Cultural Heritage



Hay Time and Networks 4 Nectar

This year has been the second and final year of the Networks 4 Nectar (N4N0) project, which has been funded by the Lancashire Environmental Fund. The project is designed to create nectar patches and mini-meadows to help to bridge the gap between the larger meadow sites within the AONB.

In order to achieve this, we have worked with six local businesses, five schools, four community groups and two individuals, in order to ensure the ongoing maintenance of the sites we have created. Local businesses have been creating nectar patches within their grounds, for example at the Stirk House Hotel near Gisburn; the schools have had practical help and equipment to produce plug plants for meadows, a summer visit to the restored meadow at Stephen Park, and a second autumn visit to plant out their plugs; community groups have produced mini-meadows and nectar patches, for example we have worked with the Lancaster Beekeepers Community Pollinator patch group to support and extend their work in and around the Lune Valley.

We have also been spreading the word about the need to provide food for pollinators through our public events. During the year we ran ten events, ranging from building a huge bug hotel to guided walks and meadow craft activities, with 142 people attending.

During the summer our field scale Hay Time meadow restoration and enhancement work continued. We worked on eleven meadow sites covering almost 27 ha, with help from funding from Biffa through the Coronation Meadows project and through the agri-environment schemes (which pay for the work on the ground).

The final job for the year was to put together funding bids to develop the work further for the coming year. An application was put forward to LEF for a project called Wildflowers 4 the Meadows, which would help community groups to propagate and grow on late flowering meadows species characteristic of Bowland meadows, providing training and advice to help them take the work forwards into the future.

Wildflowers at Crook O'Lune, Lancaster
© Sarah Robinson

Plug planting with local school children
© Sarah Robinson

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Natural & Cultural Heritage

Benefiting rivers and the landscape

Environment Agency officers recently supported a Bowland farmer to plan and construct a new silage clamp and earth bank slurry lagoon. Initially, the farmer was having difficulty ensuring the new structures were appropriate in planning terms. Once these issues were solved, planning permission was granted. The slurry lagoon in particular is very sizeable, but can't be seen when passers-by look towards the farm, thereby preserving the landscape. It's important for farmers to note that if they want to install new silage, slurry or oil storage infrastructure, the SSAFO regulations are likely to apply, and they are required to contact the Environment Agency before work commences. Talking to the Environment Agency at an early stage can often be beneficial as they can help advise on how to plan to avoid environmental impacts and comply with the regulations.



New earth bank slurry lagoon
© John Stalker, Environment Agency

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Resilient & Sustainable Communities

Dark Sky Discovery

Imagine yourself on a frosty, winter evening wrapped in an inky darkness and sprinkled in starlight, in awe of the view as the cosmos magically reveals itself in the wondrous dark skies of Bowland....

In 2015 a national initiative awarded Dark Sky Discovery Site status to four sites in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty: Beacon Fell Country Park; Crook O'Lune Picnic Site; Gisburn Forest Hub and Slaidburn Village car park. Dark Sky Discovery Sites are recognised by the Dark Sky Discovery Partnership (managed by the Science and Technology Facilities Council UK Astronomy Technology Centre in Edinburgh) as places within the UK that are both dark and easily accessible, but where it is possible to observe the spectacle of the Milky Way or the constellations, such as Orion, with the naked eye.

Hetty Byrne, Forest of Bowland Sustainable Tourism Officer said: 'We're delighted to join the Dark Sky Discovery Partnership's growing network of sites which highlight the best spots to see the night skies in the UK.'

The AONB has been working with local physicist and amateur astronomer Robert Ince, who has assessed the night skies, how they are affected by light pollution and identified the best and darkest places to star gaze. The process also involved consultation with land owners and local authorities to gain their support for the project.

Alongside Discovery Site developments the AONB developed a 'Star-Tips for Profit' workshop open to Bowland Experience members, where they learn how to promote the opportunities of dark sky tourism. By attending the workshop and completing a business audit, tourism businesses can apply to the AONB for 'Dark Sky Friendly' Business status.

The dark skies have already captured people's imagination and events organised at Beacon Fell in 2015 were fully booked. We are looking forward to providing more events next year as part of the Festival Bowland programme, working with astronomer Robert Ince.

For further information visit <http://forestofbowland.com/Star-Gazing>



Bowland's beautiful dark skies
© Robert Ince

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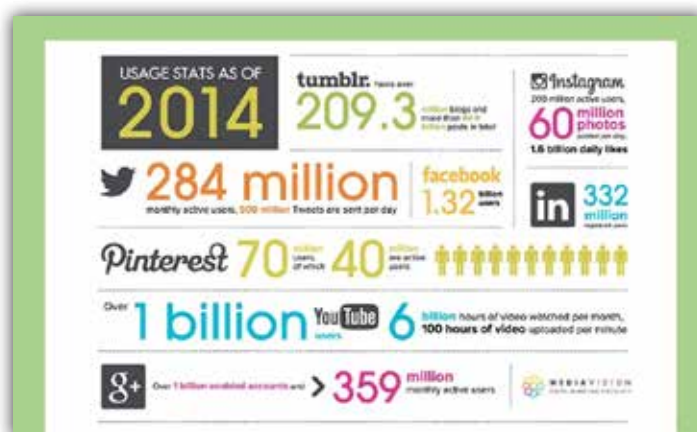
Resilient & Sustainable Communities

Bowland Experience (BEx)

The sustainable tourism business network continues to grow - during 2015/16 there have been 11 new members - bringing the total to 120. The board also appointed two new directors: Margaret Wright, Cobden Farm and Mike Pugh, who retired from the AONB team in 2014. Robert Gardener from Bleasdale Cottages retired and was thanked for the time he had spent supporting BEx for the last eight years.

Activity in 2015/16 included:

- Development of a 'Know your AONB' workshop - designed for new members to the network to inform them of the special qualities of the AONB and the opportunities for visitors. A Social Media Workshop was also organised at the Tithe Barn, Browsholme Hall on 30th September and was attended by 10 businesses. 15 businesses attended the 'Star Tips for Profit' workshop to support their business in becoming dark-sky friendly.
- Business cards promoting the Electric Bike Network have been produced and distributed to increase awareness of the opportunities available and the Teashops leaflet was re-printed with contributions from Bowland Experience members.
- Awards galore! - very well done to Bowland Wild Boar Park, Cobden Farm B&B, Dalesbridge, Middle Flass Lodge and the Three Fishes who were recently re-accredited by Green Tourism; they all maintained their awards. And to The Parkers Arms, receiving a Highly Commended Taste of England Award. They were up against some of the finest eateries in the country, so a fantastic achievement!
- The annual Sustainable Tourism Forum & Bowland Experience AGM was held on Tuesday 10th November at the Assheton Arms, Downham. It was a buzzing evening with updates on dark sky tourism, opportunities through Rural Development Funding and updates from Champion Bowland. Thanks to the Assheton Arms for providing such a cosy venue with fantastic food.
- During the spring BEx also began engaging in the world of social media, with the development of a visitor-facing Facebook page so that members can share news, events and offers – visit <https://www.facebook.com/bowlandexperience>. Also, a business-to-business closed group, so that members can communicate more easily with each other. To support this we ran several refresher sessions on using Facebook during the spring, at the AONB office.



Know Your AONB workshop invitation

Electric Bike Network business card

Social Media Workshop slide

© Tech & Toast

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Resilient & Sustainable Communities

Sustainable Development Fund 2015

This year the AONB Sustainable Development Fund has provided nearly £16,000 of grant support to five projects, generating over £40,000 worth of sustainable activity in the Forest of Bowland.

The first two projects went to community buildings - £4408 to Bolton by Bowland village hall where insulation and LED lighting have been installed to increase the hall's energy efficiency and to reduce its running costs; and £2000 to Burton in Lonsdale's sports pavilion where the community have been working hard to create a new building which will eventually be generating its own energy from renewable sources. Our grant paid for hot water cylinders which will act as heat stores once the system is up and running.

£2000 was awarded to the Ribble Rivers Trust to run a specialist course for environmental practitioners in pinpointing diffuse pollution in our watercourses. The course was subsidised to enable at least 5 members of staff from AONB based organisations to attend, so that the area will benefit from improved advice and reduced pollution in the long term.

The Deer Initiative were granted £3450 to run a series of school and public talks; to hold a best practice event for partners; to have a presence at a food festival, and to carry out surveys of 4000ha of the AONB to assess the health and extent of the deer populations. They are looking to raise awareness of good deer management to conserve our woodland habitats and also to create a specialist food supply.

Finally, St James' church at Dalehead near Tosside was given a grant of £3943 to help repair the wind turbine and replace the battery storage which helps to heat and power this picturesque chapel building which once served the community of Stocks in Bowland. This is a particularly poignant and special grant as it is the last SDF grant to be awarded in the AONB, and it goes to a project which was amongst one of the first to be supported back in 2005.

The Joint Advisory Committee has decided to close the SDF grant scheme for business as AONB funds are under increasing pressure and other areas of work are considered to be of higher priority. It has been an incredibly successful scheme and many projects and communities have benefitted from investment and seen an increase in sustainable activity in the area over the last 11 years.



Ribble Rivers Trust training session.
© Ribble Rivers Trust

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Resilient & Sustainable Communities

Champion Bowland

Champion Bowland is a small charity which works to enhance the outstanding landscape of the Forest of Bowland AONB. It does this by raising funds from visitor donations and charitable activity; and these funds are then awarded to local projects which benefit the environment, local communities and visitors.

The Fund is administered by a small group of Trustees – chaired by Paul Reynolds (of the Traddock Hotel), and includes: Martin Charlesworth (Friends of Bowland), Brenda Mccloughin (Spread Eagle), Phil Dykes (ex Lancashire Wildlife Trust) and Janet Sharp (Height Top Farm holiday cottages). Champion Bowland is also supported by the AONB Unit and Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust.

In 2015/16 Champion Bowland saw several existing grants reach completion, such as the new village green shelter at Dunsop Bridge which was officially opened by the High Sheriff of Lancashire in January 2016. The shelter was constructed to celebrate the Queen's jubilee, and now offers a warm dry space for visitors and locals alike.

The Friends of Beacon Fell also spent their grant – learning how to scythe at Bell Sykes farm as part of the Networks for Nectar project – and then taking these and other seed collection and propagation skills, back to Beacon Fell where they are developing and managing an important pollinator area.

Church Goes Wild at Knowle Green benefitted from Champion Bowland support in the summer of 2015 – purchasing a moth trap and accessories so that group members can trap and monitor moths, and contribute to their knowledge of the local area and its wildlife.

Our final grant for the year went to Lancaster Beekeepers to help them to create a network of their own nectar patches along the Lune valley between Hornby and Crook o Lune. This incredibly active group have mobilised and inspired landowners, managers, volunteers and organisations to help them to turn patches of overgrown and neglected public space into wonderful wildflower havens which act as fuel stops for all manner of bees, butterflies and other important pollinators.

Champion Bowland is delighted to have supported so many biodiversity projects this year; but do remember that the Trustees also support community, tourism, heritage and access projects too – see our website for further information www.championbowland.org.uk



Friends of Beacon Fell learning to scythe
© Forest of Bowland AONB

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Resilient & Sustainable Communities



Marketing Lancashire

Marketing Lancashire worked in partnership with the Forest of Bowland AONB to develop a new Forest of Bowland destination section on visitlancashire.com specifically aimed at the visitor market. Information and product listings includes events, where to stay, attractions and places to eat, as well as walking and cycling routes and information on the towns and villages of Bowland. Page views to the product from April 2015 to March 2016 stand at 43,000 - a 20% increase on the previous year:

The Forest of Bowland featured in the Visit Lancashire Summer campaign targeting parents and grandparents with families of all ages looking for things to do, events and places to stay during the summer months. Highlights of the campaign included:

- 32 page digital short breaks guide – 33,000 impressions to date
- Dedicated campaign page views on visitlancashire.com – 23,933
- Summer partner pages on visitlancashire.com - 252,712 page views
- Themed newsletters to over 70,000+ contacts
- Social Media /hash tag reach of 3,439,805
- Prize draw entries – 7,631

The Forest of Bowland also featured in the Visit Lancashire Autumn campaign targeting ABC1 older couples and groups looking for short breaks in the UK. This campaign ran from September 2015 – January 2016. Highlights included:

- 42 page digital short breaks guide – 11,000 impressions to date
- Sept – Jan visitlancashire.com received - 1,937,416 page views
- Dedicated campaign page on visitlancashire.com – 23,109 page views
- 2 themed newsletters sent to 70,000+ email contacts
- Social media messages potential reach of 1,146,790

As part of the Northern Tourism Growth Fund Marketing Lancashire promoted Lancashire attractions, including the Forest of Bowland AONB, at events in the USA, Netherlands, Germany, Australia and London.

Since the main activity commenced (summer 2015) international traffic to visitlancashire.com has increased in each of the key target markets, with new users from USA +12% (New York +31%), from Germany +49%, and from Australia +5%.

The programme ended in March 2016 but media visits will continue throughout the year, with evaluation of the programme expected at the end of 2016.

Downham village
© Visit England

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A Strong Connection Between People & The Landscape

Discovery Guide

Dark Sky Discovery Sites; family-friendly activities; local producers and over 80 Festival Bowland events are just a few of the things featured in 2016's Discover Bowland brochure.

Local businesses, tourism staff, event organisers and councillors were all invited to celebrate the release of the brand new guide, which was launched at the Shireburn Arms, Hurst Green on 19th January – one of several venues owned by Bowland Experience member, James' Places.

The publication aims to showcase the landscape, wildlife, people and places of the Forest of Bowland AONB and has been written with both residents and visitors in mind. It provides "cut out and keep" walk pages, ideas for family activities, Festival Bowland events, spots for star gazing and seasonal wildlife highlights. A special "Produce with Personality" feature delves behind the scenes of four Bowland businesses. From ice-cream made in what was an eighteenth century toll house, to a successful business which started out making sausages at the kitchen table, there are some fascinating stories behind this local produce.

Keen photographers had the chance to get one of their pictures chosen for the 2017 Bowland calendar, whilst youngsters could have fun coming up with ideas for a new ice-cream flavour, or working out the subjects in the Bowland Picture Puzzle Competition.

Thanks go again to members of the Bowland Experience network who supported the guide through business advertising. An on-line version is available on the Forest of Bowland AONB website at www.forestofbowland.com



A Strong Connection Between People & The Landscape

Communication Projects

New railway station interpretation

During the spring, working with Bentham Community Rail Partnership and Northern Rail, the AONB have developed new information boards at Giggleswick, Clapham, Bentham and Wennington railway stations. The Bentham Line train stations are ideal gateways into the AONB and provide the opportunity for visitors to explore by bike or on foot. The interpretation boards, as well as providing links to walking and cycling routes, highlight information about the wildlife, vibrant communities, dark skies and tourism businesses, to entice visitors to stay longer and experience the fantastic opportunities the area has to offer.

Gerald Townson, chair of the Bentham Line Community Rail Partnership (CRP) commented: "The Bentham Line, which links Leeds in the east to Lancaster and Morecambe in the west, skirts the northern edge of the marvellous Forest of Bowland. The train makes it easy for people to visit and help keep their journey environmentally friendly. These areas of unspoiled natural beauty need to be maintained that way for future generations, and using the train helps to achieve that. They offer a wealth of opportunities for everyone to enjoy them and help look after them."

For further information visit: <http://forestofbowland.com/Bentham-Line>

Parish Logo

Early in 2016 we worked with Bolton-by-Bowland, Gisburn Forest and Sawley Parish Council to develop a parish logo with a Bowland identity, which could be used on their new parish website. Have a look at their newly launched website - <http://tsbparish.org.uk/>

Other parishes have been encouraged to utilise the logo to create a link with the AONB.

Tick Leaflet

We have been working with Public Health England to produce a new Tick Information poster, so that visitors and local people can find out more about ticks and how to protect themselves. The poster is available to download from the website <http://forestofbowland.com/Walking-Safely>

Public Health England (PHE) monitors changes in tick distributions and investigates the drivers for these changes. The new leaflet also encourages the public to monitor ticks by participating in their nationwide surveillance via the Tick Recording Scheme (www.gov.uk/tick-recording-scheme).



A Strong Connection Between People & The Landscape

Bowland Explorers' Club

Between summer 2015 and spring 2016 Bowland Explorers were busy gathering clues to the whereabouts of their founder, Gertrude Fulshaw Smythe, and discovering Bowland at the same time!

Intrepid explorer Gertrude set off on her travels 50 years ago and had been proving very elusive ever since! In order to track her down the Bowland Explorers Club took their creative activities on tour to various events in and around the AONB, recruiting members and introducing them to the landscape and wildlife of the Forest of Bowland. Cloudspotting at Gisburn Forest, Blackburn Heritage Festival and Burnley Canal Festival were just some of their stopping off points.

As the club grew, various branches developed, including Mums2Mums in Brierfield, the Mechanics at Home Craft group in Burnley and Foxes of the Fold in Bolton.

The finale – and success! – came when over 200 Bowland Explorers gathered at Gisburn Forest Hub and put in a concerted effort to track down their wayward leader. Suitably attired, scores of families set out to follow the forest trail where they encountered all sorts of fantastical surprises courtesy of Wild Rumpus.

Their hard work paid off when Gertrude finally appeared from the depths of the forest to a very noisy reception!

The event was the culmination of Bowland Revealed, an Arts Council England funded programme which began in 2014 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the designation of the Forest of Bowland AONB. The programme was managed by Mid Pennine Arts and additional funding came from Lancashire County Council, the Forest of Bowland AONB and Ribble Valley Borough Council.

The steering group would like to thank all the partners, agencies and landowners who helped to make this golden anniversary project possible. "Reports" and pictures from the Explorers' events can be found at www.midpenninearts.org.uk/bowland-explorers



A group of Bowland Explorers!
© Mid Pennine Arts

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A Strong Connection Between People & The Landscape



Wyre Coast and Countryside Service

Access for all

Wyre Council's rangers and volunteers helped to provide access for all by looking after popular picnic areas such as Brock Picnic Area and gateway access points to the Forest of Bowland.

Promoted route management

With the support of landowners and other partners, two volunteer teams, coordinated by the rangers, carried out an annual programme of surveys, maintenance and improvement on paths, routes and trails promoted on the Forest of Bowland website. These routes were patrolled regularly by volunteers and minor repairs and vegetation management undertaken. Larger scale improvements were carried out by work parties and contractors. The main centres for these walking routes are Garstang, Caldervale, Bleasdale and Scorton. Improvement works to the paths on Nicky Nook were completed with funding from LCC Public Rights of Way and support from Wyre and the AONB team.

Festival Bowland

Wyre volunteer walk leaders and rangers provided a varied programme of activities including guided walks such as the Brown Hare Walk, Trumper treks, health walks and the Garstang walking festival.

Garstang Walking Festival

In 2015 the Friends of Garstang Walking Festival coordinated the Festival supported by Wyre Council. Taking place the second week in May, the festival celebrates springtime in Garstang, rural Wyre and the Forest of Bowland and aims to encourage new visitors as well as local residents to try new routes and keep healthy and active. The 10-day festival included old favourites like the Wyre Way Challenge, a four-day, 41 mile riverside walk from sea to source and the Bluebell Tea Walks, both great examples of the festival supporting local cafes and community events along the way. Some walks were co-lead by our local estate landowners and farmers who provided an insight into rural land management. Many of the walks were accessible to people with restricted mobility and Trampers were available for hire with support from volunteer leaders who provided advice and information about the area.

Volunteers taking a break on Nicky Nook
© Wyre Coast and Countryside Service

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A Strong Connection Between People & The Landscape

50th Anniversary Exhibition

Although the 50th anniversary of the Forest of Bowland AONB's designation actually fell in 2014, we were given a great opportunity to extend the celebrations with an 11 week run at the Museum of Lancashire in Preston.

Working with the designers at the museum we exhibited large scale versions of our Sense of Place information, key AONB facts and a huge panorama image of the Hodder valley. One section of the exhibition was devoted to excerpts from the Bowland Scrapbook, suitably displayed on "pin boards". The wonderful images which had been donated by residents and visitors as part of our anniversary photography celebration looked fantastic and made a real impact covering one wall.

Keen to offer something for the whole family, the exhibition also featured a number of interactive activities for children, including a wildlife spotter game complete with "hide" and binoculars; a mini "dry stone" wall activity and the chance to leave stories and messages on our memory tree. One young visitor commented, "It's so fun for my birthday. It feels like everything's real."

Officially opened by County Councillor Marcus Johnstone, the launch event included a presentation by Slaidburn-based photographer, Helen Shaw, featuring images from her book, *The Forest of Bowland*, written with Andrew Stachulski.

On show from 9th May to 26th July, the exhibition also benefited from the treasure trove of collections and objects held by the museum, with an old cheese press, hand shearing machine and work bench all making an appearance.

The exhibition was a fantastic chance for us to give a wider audience a taste of what the Forest of Bowland is all about – including some of the things we got up to in our anniversary year.

It was great working with such a professional museum team - and having access to their wonderful artefacts!



50th Anniversary Exhibition Poster
© Lancashire Museum Service

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A Strong Connection Between People & The Landscape

Festival Bowland

With events from February to late December, Festival Bowland 2015 offered activities across the AONB, highlighting the birds, wildlife, landscape and culture of the Forest of Bowland.

The challenge and fun of practical conservation work was taken up enthusiastically, with balsam pulling in Wyre and hedgelaying in Lancaster both proving popular.

Bowland's wildlife was again one of the Festival focal points: visitors making the most of the expert knowledge on hand. The annual Whimbrel roost watch – run jointly by Wyre Countryside Service and RSPB – and Lancashire Wildlife Trust's bat walk and early morning bird walk attracted good visitor numbers.

Spring- and summer-time flowers worked their colourful magic once again. Woodland bluebell walks at Spring Wood and Calder Vale were well attended, as were the Coronation Meadow teas walks in Slaidburn. A guided tour of Claughton Hall grounds and gardens outside Garstang was well supported, whilst Clearbeck garden in Tatham, opening over three days as part of the National Gardens Scheme, received over 500 visitors.

Our annual Festival visit to the Uclan excavation above Whitewell saw a number of familiar faces joining us to hear about the latest archaeological discoveries on site.

The varied programme at Beacon Fell Country Park, organised by countryside rangers and the Friends of Beacon Fell, was very popular – an Easter trail attracting over 100 children and family members and the autumn woodcraft day hosting around 300 visitors. The four summer Gruffalo sessions booked up very quickly and reached over 100 participants.

In a break from tradition, the Lord of Bowland's fifth annual lecture featured the work of Cumbria-based composer, Christopher Gibbs. During the evening, Chris played excerpts from his Forest of Bowland Suite and gave the 55-strong audience an insight into the inspiration behind his music. The Tithe Barn at Browsholme provided a lovely setting for what proved a very successful event.

Our thanks once again go to the organisations, volunteers, countryside staff and local businesses who put so much time and effort into their events and without whom the Festival would not be possible.



The Lord of Bowland's 5th Annual Lecture at Browsholme Hall
© Forest of Bowland AONB

Uclan excavations above Whitewell
© Forest of Bowland AONB

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Working in Partnership

Bowland Land Managers Forum

The Forum met three times during the year (May, September and February) to discuss a diverse range of topics, from the Countryside Stewardship grant schemes and rural development funding to high nature value farming and black grouse conservation.

Spring 2015 saw the return of Phil Warren from the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT) to update Forum members on the status of Black grouse conservation efforts in Northern England and in particular the potential to restore this species to the Bowland Fells. Since this meeting, landowners and the AONB Partnership were able to support further planning and assessment work required to pave the way for a future Black grouse conservation project led by the Bowland Land Managers Forum. We await news of this year's breeding season across Northern England before deciding on next steps for this exciting development.

Several farming members of the Forum have also been involved in a 'High Nature Value (HNV) Farming' group established by the Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Partnership. This group has been working on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the HNV farming report commissioned by NUC LNP to look at the future of this type of low-intensity, environmentally sensitive farming, particularly with the likely decline in agri-environment funding (<http://www.nuclnp.org.uk/themes-and-projects/>).

Farmers from the Bowland Land Managers Forum took part in a visit to County Clare, Ireland in August 2015 to visit pioneering 'Results-Based Agri-environment Payment Scheme' (RBAPS) projects in the Burren and Shannon Callows. Officers from the AONB Unit and Ribble Rivers Trust also took part in this visit.

The work of the HNV farming group has since focused on two principal projects currently in development:

- A bid for EU Environment DG funding was successful to establish a pilot RBAPS project in Wensleydale. Bowland farmers and the AONB Partnership will be involved in the design and testing of this new approach, with view to a future scheme being developed for Bowland.
- Establishing a 'Northern Hill Farmer Panel' to raise the profile of hill and upland farming within Government and other strategic organisations (e.g. Local Enterprise Partnerships).



Black grouse
© Nancy Parsons (GWCT)

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Working in Partnership



National Association for AONBs

The AONB Unit and JAC Chair have been involved in a number of events, seminars and projects co-ordinated by the National Association for AONBs, including:

Northern AONBs Group Meeting, Northumberland Coast AONB, 20th May 2015

The Northern AONBs group met at Seahouses in Northumberland in May 2015 to learn about new project developments, share best practice and to hear updates from the National Association for AONBs staff. The meeting also included an opportunity to visit the Farne Islands to learn about the National Trust's conservation work for seabirds and island heritage.

NAAONB Chairmen's Conference and AGM, London, Thursday 19th November 2015

The Principal AONB Officer attended the third annual NAAONB Chairmen's Conference, which was held in conjunction with the charity's Annual General Meeting. The conference was very pleased to welcome Defra Under-Secretary with responsibility for AONBs, Rory Stewart MP. The minister talked with great passion about the importance of landscapes and conserving beauty and outlined his commitment to ensure AONB Partnerships are adequately resourced to continue to function and deliver their Management Plans.

NAAONB Communications Strategy Review

The AONB Sustainable Tourism Officer worked with NAAONB and other AONB Partnership's communications staff to review the National Association's Communication Strategy. The review was completed during the year with one meeting in Birmingham and further teleconference meetings. A particular focus of the review was to establish 'Outstanding Week', a nationwide programme of events co-ordinated each September to promote the AONB Family and Landscapes for Life brand.

Landscapes
for life
.org.uk

THE NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION
Areas of Outstanding
Natural Beauty

Sea birds encountered on the Northern AONBs Farne Islands visits
© Forest of Bowland AONB

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Working in Partnership

Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Partnership

In spring 2015, the Forest of Bowland AONB Partnership formally joined the Northern Upland Chain LNP, alongside Nidderdale and North Pennines AONBs and Yorkshire Dales and Northumberland National Parks.

Since joining, the LNP has focused on three principal areas of work: valuing natural capital; data/evidence gathering to plan habitat conservation and woodland planting opportunities; and high-nature value farming.

Valuing Natural Capital

The principal purpose of the LNP's work to value the areas 'natural capital' is to stimulate new investments in natural capital (from both private and public sector interests) to help reverse its long-term decline and sustain the goods and services that nature provides for society, and on which almost every business depends. This work has led to the development of investment prospectuses outlining both the offer and 'real world' investment opportunities in peatland and woodland.

Habitat Opportunities Maps

Northumberland National Park Authority has led on key evidence gathering work which has resulted in the production of a series of habitat opportunities maps for peatland, woodland and species-rich grassland. This data will prove invaluable in future management planning exercises for AONBs and National Parks.

High Nature Value Farming

The HNV farming work is summarised under the 'Bowland Land Managers Forum' article within this annual report.



Working in Partnership

Recent departures from Bowland

In March 2016, Tarja Wilson and Nick Osborne, took voluntary redundancy from Lancashire County Council. Both have been valued team members and supporters of the work of the AONB Partnership over the years:

Tarja Wilson

Tarja worked in various positions for Lancashire County Council, supporting the work of the AONB Partnership for over 25 years.

One of Tarja's major achievements was the establishment of the North Lancashire Bridleway, a 47km route cutting through the AONB from Lancaster to Chipping. She has also been a keen promoter of extending countryside access to all, developing a range of routes suitable for Trampers (all-terrain mobility scooters), wheelchairs users and people with limited mobility.

More recently as a Senior Environmental Officer, Tarja has been instrumental in the setting up the Lancashire Peat Partnership; securing a co-ordinated approach to peatland restoration work on the fells. Tarja has successfully combined access improvements in the uplands with this wider habitat restoration work.

Tarja has a deep knowledge and understanding of Bowland and the uplands in general, and she uses this to ensure that not only is the landscape conserved and enhanced, but it can be enjoyed by as wide a range of people as possible. She really will be missed by the AONB Partnership.

Nick Osborne

Nick's direct involvement in the management of the AONB Unit and Partnership began in 2011, in his role as the Countryside Sites and AONB Manager. However, Nick had been involved in projects and activities in Bowland for much longer; having worked for LCC Countryside Service since the early 1990s.

Nick (amongst others) was instrumental in growing the Lancashire Countryside Service to become the envy of many County Councils in England; pioneering work to create country parks, volunteer ranger services and widen countryside access to more and a wider range of people.

With this wealth of knowledge and experience of countryside management in Lancashire, Nick has been invaluable for advice and guidance to the AONB team; helping to smooth the way for others to take up the mantle, as we move into different times for this sector. Again, Nick will be greatly missed by all, but I'm sure we'll bump into him walking with Gale on Longridge Fell or along the Langden valley soon enough!



Tarja Wilson, 1st left and Nick Osborne, back middle.
© Daniel Tierney, Medialune

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Financial Summary

	Actual 2015/2016 (Out-turn prices) £'s
EXPENDITURE	
Core Costs	
Salary, N.I. and Superannuation	159057.39
Out-based premises	21040.17
Travel and subsistence	6326.34
Central, Departmental & Tech. Support	55351.97
Core Activities	20304.14
SUB TOTAL OF CORE COSTS	262080.01
Non Core Costs	
Employees	
Travel and subsistence	
Projects (inc. SDF)	94001.11
SUB TOTAL OF NON CORE COSTS	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	356081.12
INCOME	
Government Grants	
Defra Grant	208143
Contributions	
United Utilities	6800
Other project contributions	3265
County Councils	
Lancashire	38,186
North Yorkshire	6800
District Councils	
Craven	6800
Lancaster	6800
Pendle	6800
Preston	6800
Ribble Valley	6800
Wyre	6800
TOTAL INCOME RECEIVED	303994.15
CONTRIBUTION TO SUPPORT COSTS (IN KIND)	
Lancashire County Council	52086.97
	356081.12

Membership



Membership and Terms of Reference of the Joint Advisory Committee 2015/16

Lancashire County Council

County Councillor A Atkinson
County Councillor S Charles
County Councillor K Ellard

North Yorkshire County Council

County Councillor R Welch

Craven District Council

Councillor I Thompson

Lancaster City Council

Councillor J Parkinson

Wyre Borough Council

Alderman R Brooks

Ribble Valley Borough Council

Councillor Mrs R Elms

Preston City Council

Councillor J Browne

Pendle Borough Council

Councillor J Starkie

Lancashire Association of Local Councils

Mr M Helm

Yorkshire Local Councils Association

Councillor C Price

United Utilities

Mr N Kidd

Environment Agency

Ms H Dix

Natural England

Mr R Hymas

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)

Mr G Jones

Bowland Land Managers' Forum

Mr A Taylor

Mr T Binns

Ramblers Association

Mr D Kelly

Champion Bowland

Mr J Collinson

Bowland Experience Limited

Mr J Beavan

Friends of Bowland

Mr G Morries

Moorland Association

Mr J Duckworth

Membership

The Committee and its constituent bodies are responsible for the implementation of the AONB Management Plan. The role of the Committee and its Terms of Reference, is as follows:-

The Joint Advisory Committee supports and encourages an active partnership between all of the agencies involved and co-ordinates management over the whole of the AONB. The aim is to:

- promote the AONB at national, regional and local level,
- ensure that the landscape of the AONB is conserved and enhanced appropriately through the implementation of the AONB Management Plan,
- work to assist the social and economic well being of the AONB commensurate with the conservation of its special qualities,
- provide a forum for the exchange of information and ideas,
- consider any issues likely to affect the area adversely and agree appropriate action
- make recommendations for new initiatives

A range of organisations with interests in the AONB is eligible for membership. Members include local authorities and the key organisations and interests, including representatives of local people, whose involvement will assist in implementing the Management Plan. Membership is kept under review and is at the discretion of the local authorities. Ideally there should be between 10 and 20 members and, where it is not practicable to include all of the represented interests, regular consultation mechanisms should be established.

Brief for the Joint Advisory Committee:

- co-ordinate the preparation and implementation of strategic plans for the AONB, including the preparation of the statutory Management Plan
- advise local authorities preparing structure plans, local plans or other plans covering all or part of the AONB, to ensure that policies and practices (including those for development control) are co-ordinated and consistent with the statement of commitment and AONB Management Plan
- advise local authorities and other agencies on the level of resources required for effective AONB management
- lobby to influence organisations that are not members of the JAC in the delivery of their services and programmes in order to benefit Bowland communities, businesses and the environment
- advise on, and co-ordinate the actions of the constituent organisations to achieve the objectives of the AONB and, in particular, ensure that the statement of commitment and Management Plan are implemented and reviewed. This includes:
 - receiving monitoring reports from the partners on progress and achievements in implementing the Management Plan, reviewing the Management Plan every five years and producing an annual report,
 - agreeing an annual work programme for the AONB to be delivered by the partners and the AONB Staff Unit,
 - carrying out special studies of key issues, as they arise, for example by setting up working parties or conducting research
 - advising the appropriate local planning authority about any developments within or adjacent to the AONB that are likely to affect significantly the landscape character of the area,
 - acting as forum for the discussion of major issues affecting the character of the AONB
 - promoting other action that is necessary to further the objectives of the AONB designation



Downham from Worsaw
© Forest of Bowland AONB

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