



FOREST OF BOWLAND

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

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Cover Image - Roughlee Primary School local heritage walk
© Sandra Silk, Forest of Bowland AONB



View from the Chair: County Councillor Albert Atkinson, Chairman of the Forest of Bowland AONB Joint Advisory Committee

In November last year I was voted in as the Chair of the Joint Advisory Committee for the Forest of Bowland AONB and in little over a month we were holding a special emergency meeting to debate a proposal that could have had a massive effect on the Forest of Bowland AONB landscape. Twenty wind turbines 126 metres high from base to blade tip, if permitted at Claughton Moor overlooking the magnificent Lune Valley, would have made a mockery of the designation of Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The emergency meeting was well attended by local residents and representatives of the parishes who were united in opposing the proposal. The Joint Advisory Committee voted against the proposal and thankfully Lancaster City Council was able to refuse planning permission but it showed the vulnerability of even our finest national landscapes and the need for vigilance.

As a resident of Sabden and having done council service on county, district and parish councils for a total of twenty eight years, I am familiar with the need to balance statutory responsibilities to conserve and enhance the countryside, its wildlife and heritage with the needs of local people, farming and businesses. Those who manage the land in the Forest of Bowland are central to its appearance and qualities. They are its custodians but they and their families need a viable economic future.

The many projects reported on the Forest of Bowland website prove over and over again there is a wealth of imagination and initiative locally to create a viable economic future that can help conserve and enhance the AONB.

This is well shown in the tourism sector in and around the Forest of Bowland that is demonstrating how partnership working can help deliver economic growth and a win-win situation for the environment, public enjoyment, wildlife conservation and a growing appreciation of our heritage.

The articles in this Report show how a broad but committed partnership between communities, landowners, businesses, special interest groups, and the public sector from the parish to the county level with a dedicated team of officers across different disciplines can and do work together to ensure the Forest of Bowland stays an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. We must continue to demonstrate good value for money proving the AONB partnership is a worthwhile investment for the future.

I hope you will enjoy reading this report.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Atkinson'. The signature is fluid and cursive, written on a light-colored background.

County Councillor Albert Atkinson

AONB Manager's View



A Diamond Year for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

2009 was a diamond year for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) as our National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) in concert with the Association for National Parks (ANPA) and other protected landscapes celebrated 60 year since the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949 went on the statute books. This was the post war legislation that resulted in the designation of our 48 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, 15 National Parks as well as 297 National Nature Reserves and 19 'National Trails' & 'Long Distance Routes'.

'Diamonds in the Landscape' was the theme co-ordinated nationally by the NAAONB and ANPA to highlight the value of our protected landscapes to politicians, senior decision makers and to the general public. 60 featured walks in Northern Ireland, England and Wales included a seven and a half mile route from Dunsop Bridge to Chipping giving typical Bowland views of fells and dales.

Also in 2009 we were pleased to have the opportunity to explain and show off some of the work of the AONB Partnership in the short time available to Lancashire County Council's new Chief Executive Ged Fitzgerald as well as to the County's new Environment Director Jo Turton. The Forest of Bowland also hosted a brief visit by Helen Philips, Chief Executive of Natural England together with a party of Natural England Board Members on a visit to protected landscapes in the North West. We are grateful to local people who gave of their time to make sure the visitors were briefed on local farm projects, parish council activity and local issues in the Hodder Valley and in Chipping including some of the achievements in partnership with the AONB.

In late September last year the AONB Unit were brought under one roof for the first time. The move reflected the commitment of the Partnership to getting closer to its customers by rehousing from separate offices in Clitheroe and Preston to the Root Hill business centre at Dunsop Bridge at the heart of the AONB. Making the move also gave support to plans for getting redundant buildings of merit restored to viable use as part of a wider investment scheme in the Duchy estate that involves proposals for affordable housing in Dunsop Bridge.

An efficiency measure we brought in last year was the introduction of a Web Content Management System that enables AONB staff to update the Forest of Bowland website without incurring additional third party costs. By putting more content on the website, particularly downloadable material, and producing less paper print we have cut costs at the same time as having more up to date information available. Check out the wide range of information on the Forest of Bowland now available on www.forestofbowland.com

County and district councils are charged by government with responsibility for the conservation and enhancement of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty at the local level. And in all their decision making affecting land in AONBs councils and other public bodies including statutory undertakers and their successor private companies must be able to show that they have fully taken into account their responsibilities to conserve and enhance AONBs. The manner in which these responsibilities are discharged, the quantity and the quality of the resources allocated largely determines the level of conservation and enhancement achieved.

A partnership approach in Bowland has always proved the most effective and efficient way forwards and the contents of this annual roundup for last year show a rich and varied set of achievements in the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Don McKay, Forest of Bowland AONB Manager

Don McKay AONB Manager
© Susan MacDonald, Forest of Bowland AONB

Don McKay
AONB Manager
01200 448000
donald.mckay@lancashire.gov.uk

Natural & Cultural Heritage

AONB RSPB Outreach Education Project

During the 09/10 academic year, eight schools were invited to take part in the second year of this exciting project designed to inspire local children to celebrate and conserve the special wildlife of the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The project delivers four education sessions per school, three sessions in school and the final fourth session visiting a local farm. The sessions were designed to allow children to develop an understanding of the special Forest of Bowland landscape, and how land management by people through farming and forestry - influences the wildlife that live in this landscape. The project hopes to raise awareness of the local area, and allow children to recognise different habitats and birds and gain an understanding of the need to manage and protect the Forest of Bowland AONB. Additionally, the children were encouraged to recognise the birds in their garden and learn what they can do to help them.

In 2009/10 a further eight schools were visited including St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Claughton-on-Brock, Goosnargh Whitechapel Primary School, St Leonards C of E Primary School, Billington, Grindleton C of E Primary School, Bolton by Bowland C of E Voluntary Aided Primary School, Rathmel C of E Primary School, North Yorkshire, Wray with Botton Endowed Primary and Cawthorn's Endowed School, Abbeystead.

The project was funded by the Forest of Bowland AONB Sustainable Development Fund and Ribbles Valley Borough Council. It is delivered by RSPB field teaching staff from the RSPB Leighton Moss reserve, with support from AONB staff and the RSPB Bowland Wader project officer. Natural England have provided funding for coach travel for farm visits which has been instrumental in getting the school children on to working farms.



Brabins Endowed Primary School at New Laund Farm
© Susan MacDonald, Forest of Bowland AONB

Susan MacDonald
Forest of Bowland AONB
01200 448000
susan.macdonald@lancashire.gov.uk

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Blooming Marvellous

After much hard work during the past four to five years, Guy Hope, from Robert Hall Farm, has managed to turn around the demise of 18 hectares of herb rich unimproved pasture on Perry moor, above Low Bentham. Having removed large areas of gorse/hawthorn scrub and used a harvest forager to remove the build up of 'thatch' off areas of grassland, he now grazes it with long horn cattle and its many wild flowers are blooming marvellously once more.

The moor, which was first designated as Robert Hall Moor Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 1979 has many base rich flushes and supports bird's eye primrose, ragged robin, lesser spearwort, and flea sedge to name but a few of many other herb species present. It was brought into a favourable management condition by Guy Hope under a Management Agreement with the former government wildlife agency English Nature, now part of Natural England, and its positive management continues under the Higher Level Scheme of Environmental Stewardship.

The moor, which is located on a drumlin (a glacial mound), some 4km south west of Wennington above Low Bentham, is quite remarkable for the range of plants it supports, with well over 150 recorded species. It includes two nationally rare plant communities and numerous species which are now rare or very limited in distribution throughout the country.

Its plant assemblage is quite unique in Lancashire and the moor represents the largest example of a species-rich pasture of un-drained and unimproved flushed neutral grassland within the county. It is one of very few northern examples of the rare Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitat type known as 'Purple moor-grass and rush pastures', which are more commonly found in the south west of England where its type is known as culm grassland.

The remains of hedges and ditches mark old field boundaries on the moor, but there is no indication that the pastures have ever been ploughed, reseeded, under-drained or otherwise improved. The land is wet due to the impermeability of the clayey soils from which water seeps as springs down the slopes of the moor resulting in numerous base rich flushes.

The latter provide ideal conditions for the growth of bird's eye primrose and a host of other plants which now thrive due to the extensive grazing management regime that Guy Hope has re-introduced onto the moor with his herd of long horns. Such cattle are a rare breed, originating from the Craven area of northern England in the 18th Century, which almost became extinct towards the end of the 20th Century. Fortunately though The Longhorn Cattle Society, a registered Charity in the U.K., has continued to promote the breed and it is farmers like Guy hope who have kept this relatively docile breed of ancient and magnificent English Cattle alive.

The majority of the grassland on the moor consists of a community of purple moor-grass with an abundance of small sedges including yellow sedge, star sedge, carnation sedge, hairy sedge, common sedge, oval sedge, pale sedge and flea sedge. Creeping willow is also present, as well as numerous herbs such as jointed rush, devil's-bit scabious, ragged robin, lesser spearwort, marsh ragwort and knapweed, which are the most conspicuous. More open areas, particularly the short grazed base flushes, support a variety of species which have a very local distribution within Lancashire including butterwort, saw-wort, bog pimpernel, bog asphodel, spotted and northern marsh orchid and most notably bird's-eye primrose, which is nationally rare.

This type of species-rich wet grassland was once more widespread throughout the country, but has been reduced so much by drainage. As such, it is now considered to be one of the rarest and most endangered habitat in Britain.



Bird's eye primrose
© Jon Hickling, Natural England

Jon Hickling
Natural England
03000 602064
jon.hickling@naturalengland.org.uk

Natural & Cultural Heritage

Landscape Character Assessment

Conserving and enhancing the outstanding natural beauty of the Forest of Bowland AONB is our principle aim. However, in order to do this we need to fully understand the natural beauty of the landscape that we are safeguarding.

Landscape character is defined as 'a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse'. Put simply, landscape character is that which makes an area unique, and creates its sense of place.

A Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) looks at the landscape as a series of layers which overlay one another to create the features of the landscape today – these layers are the geology, natural vegetation, historic activities and the management of the land. In some areas of the Forest of Bowland these layers are relatively easy to discern. On the fells we can see the influence of the geology as in some places the rocks lie exposed; we can also see the heath and bog vegetation which is a product of historic practice. Tree clearance and enclosures; and the land also bares the imprint of current practices such as hill farming and shooting estate management. In other areas, however, these influences are harder to see and are more complex. It is here that the LCA helps us to peel back the layers and understand the influences on and changes in our landscape, changes which are still happening today in farming, population and migration, and through pressure for new developments.

Landscape Character Assessments have been carried out before in the Forest of Bowland AONB by the Countryside Commission and by Lancashire County Council (LCC). However, in 2008 Natural England and Lancashire County Council provided the funding to enable a new assessment to be drawn up at a scale of 1:25,000, and Chris Blandford Associates were commissioned to carry this out. This funding was part of Natural England's response to the European Landscape Convention which highlights the need to recognise landscape in law, to develop landscape policies dedicated to the protection, management and creation of landscapes, and to establish procedures for the participation of the general public and other stakeholders in the creation and implementation of landscape policies. It also encourages the integration of landscape into all relevant areas of policy, including cultural, economic and social policies.

The Forest of Bowland AONB Landscape Character Assessment involved the study of maps, photographs and background information; numerous field surveys; discussions with AONB and LCC staff, and with local specialists in historic and natural landscapes; and wide ranging stakeholder and community consultation. The study took nearly a year to complete, and we hope that the resulting report and series of maps, photographs and descriptions will be of use for many years into the future.

The Forest of Bowland LCA identified 14 distinct Landscape Types making up the AONB, and then sub divided these into 82 smaller character areas.

The assessment provides a full description of each landscape character type, and outlines the physical, ecological, cultural and historical features, and describes any development, settlement and buildings. The assessment then goes on to describe each of the smaller landscape character areas found in each type, illustrating the particular sense of place each area has. The study continues with a discussion of the forces for change evident in each area, and how sensitive the landscape is to these forces; and it then concludes with proposals for management guidelines for each area, to enhance and conserve its special characteristics.

We hope that during 2010/11 the Forest of Bowland AONB Unit and partners will be able to expand on the study carried out, and develop training for staff in how to understand and use this important document in our principle aim of 'conserving and enhancing the natural beauty' of the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.



What makes landscape?
© Countryside

Cathy Hopley or Tarja Wilson
Forest of Bowland AONB
01200 448000
cathy.hopley@lancashire.gov.uk
tarja.wilson@lancashire.gov.uk

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Landscape Stories

If a picture tells a thousand words, just imagine what tales a whole landscape could tell – particularly if the landscape is as diverse as the Forest of Bowland.

Landscape Stories is a community heritage project which, for the past 12 months, has been helping local residents and visitors to understand and celebrate the landscape we see today in the Forest of Bowland through discovering more about the people and activities that have helped to shape it.

Thanks to almost £50,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund, with additional funding from Lancashire County Council, Grassroots, Ribble Valley Borough Council and the AONB itself, the two year project has begun to discover some of the fascinating tales behind a number of the Forest of Bowland's traditional rural industries and historic landscapes.

Following consultation with local groups, the project focuses on four main themes: archaeology and historic landscapes in the Forest of Pendle; dairying and cheese making in the Forest of Bowland; traditional chair making around the village of Chipping and the lime industry in the southern part of the Forest of Bowland.

Central to the picture are the local groups and individuals who have committed time and energy to studying, recording and sharing their particular interest – be that cheese stones, lime kilns or ancient earthworks. And working alongside the local experts have been the landscape and heritage professionals who have provided advice, support and practical help in the form of training, resources and lots of experience.

This year has been a busy year where we've pieced together "skeletons" in the lab and discovered the treasures at the Lancashire Record Office, fashioned replica Roman oil lamps and created ceramic tiles, rolled our sleeves up to make recycled paper and rolled sheep's wool to make felt landscapes, donned hair nets to visit a cheese dairy and tied on aprons to bake cheese scones, braved the dark in a huge Hoffmann kiln and braved the wintry weather at the old silver mines!

Through training days, family events, presentations and school workshops over 380 individuals have been involved with the Landscape Stories project during 2009/10 including eight local primary schools and 192 pupils. The stories are starting to be told!



Ceramics
© Gaye Woollard

Screen Printing
© Gaye Woollard

Wheatly Lane School
© Sandra Silk,
Forest of Bowland AONB

Roughlee Primary School local
heritage walk
© Sandra Silk,
Forest of Bowland AONB

Wheatly Lane School
© Sandra Silk,
Forest of Bowland AONB

Sandra Silk
Forest of Bowland AONB
01200 448000
sandra.silk@lancashire.gov.uk

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Pendle Hill

Work has continued throughout the year to improve the condition of some of the key footpaths and bridleways on and around Pendle Hill. Further surfacing and drainage works have been carried out on the Pendle Way around Barley, the Pendleside bridleway and the busy 'cart track' route to Pendle's summit.

Much of this work has been targeted at combating erosion and the excessive trampling of agricultural grassland, and reflects the increasing use of this area by visitors from near and far.

Throughout the area, some 25 stiles have been replaced with easy access gates in order to make the countryside accessible to a wider range of people. This work also reduces problems of damage to walls and fences which are often associated with awkward stiles, and such gates are increasingly being requested by the farming community.

On the edge of the Forest of Bowland AONB at Chatburn, an idea raised by the neighbouring parish council at Grindleton has been realised with the construction of an off-road link for the Ribble Way long distance path. This project, funded by Lancashire County Council's Local Transport Plan now gives an attractive alternative to a very awkward section of road walking between the two villages.

These projects have all been carried out by local contractors, including the parish lengthsmen, and additional funding has been secured from Pendle's Barrowford and Western parishes, Pendle's Access Officer and the local parish councils.

Improvements to the fabric of the countryside around Pendle have continued with the rebuilding of significant stretches of dry-stone walling such as at Lower Sabden Fold conservation area and also the restoration of ancient hedgerows such as at Newchurch-in-Pendle. Again, much of this work has been carried out by local contractors, although members of the local communities have also been involved in activities such as dry stone walling training and hedge planting. This work complements the very significant work being carried out in the area by farmers through Environmental Stewardship, and huge improvements are currently being made to Pendle's walls and hedges in particular.



Kissing gates, Ribble Lane
© Dave Oyston, LCC

Off-road path construction, Ribble Lane
© Dave Oyston, LCC

Dave Oyston
07771 995615

Lancashire County Council Countryside Service
david.oyston@lancashire.gov.uk

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RSPB - Bowland Wader Project.

Since the Bowland Wader project began in 2001 it has had contact with over 130 farmers and at least £10.8 million of income has been secured for Bowland farmers through Natural England's agri-environment schemes.

110 farmers in the Forest of Bowland AONB are now delivering positive management for breeding waders whether through an agri-environment scheme or by voluntarily undertaking management sympathetic to breeding waders. 73 of these are delivering management through Natural England's agri-environment schemes and 305 farmers have attended Bowland Wader Project farm demonstration events.

During 2009/10, three large Higher Level Stewardship agreements have been put together by the Wader Project in Bowland at Deep Clough Farm, Littledale; Lower Salter Farm, Roeburndale and Greenlands-Stakes Farm, Cow Ark-Chipping, resulting in over 330ha of grassland now managed specifically for breeding waders, 53 scrapes have been created and 355m of ditches were re-profiled to provide vital feeding habitat for waders and their chicks.

The RSPB Bowland Wader Project officer has worked closely with the Forest of Bowland AONB and Lancashire County Council Countryside Service staff, and with Natural England advisers, to secure these agreements, and to provide ongoing 'care and maintenance' support to a number of existing project farms.

Through the RSPB & Natural England Lapwing Recovery Project, 62 farms are monitored annually. 2010 is the final year of this five year research project, which is investigating the effect of agri-environment schemes on the productivity of breeding lapwings. Early results suggest lapwing productivity is highest on farms that are in CSS / HLS and working closely with the Wader Project to maximise habitat delivery.



Newly hatched Lapwing chicks at Landskill Farm, Calder Vale.
© Gavin Thomas, RSPB

Gavin Thomas
RSPB

07814 462429

gavin.thomas@rspb.org.uk

Natural & Cultural Heritage

RSPB on United Utilities Bowland Estate

"Hugely disappointing and demoralizing" just about sums up Pete Wilson's feelings in relation to the hen harrier breeding season in 2009. Pete spends most of the winter looking forward to March and the return of the hen harriers to the high ground of the United Utilities Bowland Estates, which, for him, heralds the start of spring, even if there's still snow in the hollows on the ground, a bitter easterly wind and frosts to contend with! This optimism is almost how a child looks forward to Christmas – what is Father Christmas going to bring?!

In recent years Pete's optimism has been rewarded by good numbers of hen harriers and good productivity. But, of course, things can go down as well as up. And this was the case in 2009.

Over the course of approximately nine weeks, seven harrier nests were established. However, all was not well. It soon became apparent that some of the birds appeared to be struggling to find enough food, and this possibly led ultimately to the failure of several nests. On top of this, the productivity of two of the three successful nests was low. The final figures

panned out at seven nesting attempts, with three successful nests fledging a total of just five chicks. This was the lowest productivity in at least 20 years, and hugely disappointing. Strange though how things sort of balance themselves out, with peregrines having the best productivity figures recorded in the same time frame!

As always the people engagement activities went down a storm, with guided walks bringing in over 170 people to hear about hen harriers, upland birds, land management and the many special things that make the Forest of Bowland such a great place. This also spilled over into the now annual Hen Harrier Nest Cam project: a partnership between Lancashire County Council Countryside Service, Natural England, United Utilities and the RSPB. The public enjoyed several weeks of images of a brood of hen harriers hatching, growing and eventually fledging. In the process they learned about hen harriers, as well as the work being done by all the partners for this species and others within the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.



Hen harrier chick
© Pete Wilson, RSPB

Pete Wilson
RSPB
07968 129570
pete.wilson@rspb.org.uk

Natural & Cultural Heritage

Traditional Boundaries in the Forest of Bowland

Hedgerows

Local people spent four days in March learning and developing their hedge laying skills at North Nook near Beacon Fell with expert tutor Dave Padley. Hedges were laid in Lancashire & Westmorland style, which are designed to keep in sheep and lambs. Local landowner Peter joined the training session and will use the skills learnt on the day to continue to lay other hedges on his farm.

Hedges and the skill of hedge laying declined after the second World War as farming intensified and mechanisation increased. The National Hedge laying Society, formed in the 1970s was established to try and prevent the loss of these traditional skills. Thankfully, due to the changes that reward farmers for maintaining and reinstating traditional boundaries that support wildlife and promote biodiversity, maintenance of hedgerows is now part of good farming practice and the skills of the hedge layer are in great demand.

Dry stone Walls

Volunteer Rangers from Lancashire and Wyre Countryside Services and local contractors have been building up their skills in dry stone walling by taking part in training funded by the Forest of Bowland AONB and Natural England. Expert guidance was provided by master craftsman Mike Rushton from Tamarack Outdoors Ltd during the two day walling competition held in March.

Each participant rebuilt a two metre section of wall to the standards set by the Dry stone Walling Association for their Craftsman Certification Scheme. Tamarack Outdoors Ltd presented the prize for the best overall waller to Mr Mick Procter, with the Forest of Bowland AONB prize for most improved waller going to Mr Rob Ashton.

Hedgerows and other traditional boundaries such as dry stone walls provide excellent wildlife habitats and corridors and are an integral part of the landscape of the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The Forest of Bowland AONB runs a Traditional Boundaries programme that provides grant aid and training in the positive management of dry stone walls and hedgerows.



National Hedge laying society
www.hedgelaying.org.uk

Dry stone Walling Association
www.dswa.org.uk

Martin Charlesworth
Forest of Bowland AONB
01200 448000
martin.charlesworth@lancashire.gov.uk

Natural & Cultural Heritage

Traditional Skills Revived in Wray

Following a chance conversation at Wray Fair back in April this year the old traditional Swill basket making tradition that was once based in Wray village was given a revival.

Over three days in October seven local people, under the guidance of Owen Jones a craftsman working in the Lakes, were taken through the stages of preparing the raw materials and construction of traditional Swill Baskets.

Made from oak and hazel they are entirely sustainable and made from local materials. The oak is boiled and split into very thin sections called pelts and these are woven around a hazel rod which has been bent into a 'boule' or semicircular shape. By splitting, wedging, tying and weaving, a basket emerges made entirely out of the natural materials.

Swills were commonly made in Cumbria and Wray was the southerly most manufacturing site in the region. Made entirely from oak and hazel, the baskets were robust with a long life and were made in a variety of sizes and used widely in mills and light engineering factories in the North West of England.

At the end of the weekend all the participants had completed a swill basket and had a really good understanding of their construction. Many had sore hands, numerous cuts but most of all a great deal of personal satisfaction having created something useful from the trees growing in the woods around Wray village.



Owen demonstrates the initial structure of the basket

© Dave Padley, Lancashire County Council

Owen assisting course members with their baskets

© Dave Padley, Lancashire County Council

Dave Padley

Lancashire County Council Countryside Service

07860 578558

david.padley@lancashire.gov.uk

Natural & Cultural Heritage

Undergrounding of power lines on Waddington Fell

Almost five km (67 spans) of 11kV overhead electricity supply line was replaced with underground cable between Ringley Hey, Waddington and Chapel Croft, near Newton-in-Bowland under a partnership between United Utilities, Electricity North West and the Forest of Bowland AONB.

All the work is paid for using an allowance from the electricity regulator OFGEM. It provides money for utility companies to put unsightly poles and wires underground in scenic areas like national parks and AONBs. The need for the allowance was strongly supported by electricity customers. Even during the recession a report by Ofgem in 2009 states customer 'willingness-to-pay', research indicated that on average customers are willing to pay £2.29 for the undergrounding of overhead lines in National Parks and AONBs.

To be eligible for undergrounding, power lines have to meet the stringent requirements and restrictions applied by the Regulator. These include technical feasibility, voltage and costs per metre coming in under the caps, or limits.



Before and after the undergrounding.

© Dave Crowdy, UUES

Footnote: Friends of the Lake District began campaigning to get power lines put underground in the valleys of the Lake District as early as 1949. More recently its work led to OFGEM (the electricity regulator) agreeing to allow all electricity companies to fund work to put power lines underground in national parks and areas of outstanding natural beauty all over England.

Don McKay
Forest of Bowland AONB
01200 448000
donald.mckay@lancashire.gov.uk

Natural & Cultural Heritage

United Utilities - Langden Head

The wet summer of 2009 has provided ideal conditions for the nurse crop to grow. The stock exclusion fence around the area is living up to its name and as a result there are abundant heather and bilberry plants both germinating and recovering. There is also a healthy growth of wavy hair and other moorland grasses which have established across the site. Another wet summer and the site will be well on its way to a healthy permanent vegetation cover of moorland flora! Reservations were held on the effect of the harsh winter frost to the nurse crop grasses, but luckily once the snow cleared there was no evidence of detrimental effects to the restoration project. The year 1 geotextile matting all held firm through the hard winter.

Although a dry start to the growing season this spring, follow up treatments of aerial sprayed fertiliser and lime have been washed in by light spring rains, resulting in a current verdant flush of growth. Dinsdale Moorland Services must be congratulated on the early successes of this project.



United Utilities – Black Moss Reservoir

Students from Burnley College have teamed up with the United Utilities' Bowland Estate team to help create new woodlands at Black Moss Reservoirs, at Barley near Nelson

As part of the SCaMP project, five hectares (13 acres) of farmland is being planted with over 6000 trees to create a new native broadleaf woodland.

The students, studying for National Diploma in Countryside Management, have used the project as a practical training exercise to develop their woodland design skills and gain experience in the practical implementation of a new woodland creation scheme. Over a period of five days, students planted a total of 2000 native trees including oak, ash, alder, birch, rowan, hazel and holly, all fitted with tree tubes to protect them from damage from deer, rabbits and voles.

Steven Highley, Woodland Project Officer, said "Over the past two years, the collaboration between United Utilities' Bowland Estate Team and Burnley College has seen various student groups carry out a number of practical conservation tasks on UU owned land helping them gain valuable practical experience to supplement their college based studies."



Iain Grindy
United Utilities
01200 454404
ian.grindy@uuplc.co.uk

Langden Head, re-profiling geotextile matting works
© Dinsdale Moorland Services
Langden Head, establishment of native plants
© Dinsdale Moorland Services

Steven Highley
United Utilities
01200 454404
steven.highley@uuplc.co.uk

Burnley College students at Barley
© United Utilities

Natural & Cultural Heritage

United Utilities – New Buildings for Bowland

As part of the five year Sustainable Catchment Management Programme (SCaMP) on United Utilities Bowland Estate, we have been busy building nine new farm buildings to provide winter shelter for sheep and cattle. We have constructed two new roofs over existing middens to increase the muck storage capacity, built two new covered middens, extended a sheep building, demolished two old barns and replaced them with livestock housing and sheep handling facilities, and erected two multi purpose buildings for over wintering hogs and storing fodder. In addition we have restored two traditional farm buildings and modernised them to meet the needs of modern day farming.

Areas of degraded blanket bog on the fells are being restored to active blanket bog, and areas of bare peat are being re-vegetated with heather and other upland grass species to stabilise the ground and to prevent further erosion of the soil. This operation requires the land to be excluded from sheep for five to ten years, so additional livestock housing and associated muck handling facilities are required on the farms to accommodate the livestock over the winter months. This also means the farmers can carry out lambing and calving indoors and so protect the land and associated water courses from potential problems such as cryptosporidium which could result in a risk to public health if not treated.

The ultimate aim of this building work is to help improve habitats and the quality of the water coming from the land. It has also helped us to meet Government targets for bringing SSSI land into favourable or favourable recovering condition by 2010. SCaMP has been instrumental in helping us meet these targets on our Bowland Estate.



Higher Brennand Farm Sheep Handling Building
© United Utilities

Brennand Farm Building and Higher Brennand Farm
Sheep Handling Building
© United Utilities

Halsteads Sheep Building
© United Utilities

Caroline Holden

United Utilities
01200 454404
caroline.holden@uuplc.co.uk

Natural & Cultural Heritage

Wyre Coast & Countryside Service

Wyre Borough Council Coast & Countryside Service works with statutory and voluntary partners, agencies, local communities, youth groups and volunteers to undertake the careful management of the natural and cultural resources in the western edge of the Forest of Bowland AONB.

Wyre Countryside Service Rangers and volunteers patrol and managed the following key visitor sites: Brock Picnic Area and Valley, Nicky Nook and Grizedale Valley and Delph Quarry lay-by, Grizedale Bridge, Harris End Fell lay-bys and Scorton Millennium Way.

In November, the Bleasdale Parish Hall Committee, Forest of Bowland partners and Wyre Rangers joined in the national attempt at the world record for planting the most trees in one hour, 'Tree O'clock'. The event was held on a rather cold Sunday at Bleasdale and 20 members of the public joined in to plant 500 trees. This was followed by a 'walk and talk' with Paul Bullimore, Lancashire County Council's Woodlands Project Officer, and bird box building with the Rangers.

Following on from Tree O'clock Wyre's Countryside Volunteers, as part of the Parish Wood's management plan, erected a fence around the wood to protect it from stock. This included installing three new gates to allow public access. Once the fence was in, a new hedge was planted, which in time should replace the fence.

December brought the unusual amounts of snow and while it brought some jobs to a halt, it created a whole new list of things to do. Regular patrols were carried out to check that any visitors that had ventured out hadn't got stuck, snowed in, broken down and while the salt in the yellow bins lasted to spread some on the road when ever passing, extra bagged salt was used to supplement the gritting activities in key locations.

Wyre's Countryside Rangers and Volunteers completed 1227 site Patrols, meeting 13,678 visitors and collecting 105 bags of litter; 405 volunteer days supported this work.



Wyre Volunteer Countryside Rangers patrolling in the Brock Valley at Christmas

© Greg Robinson, Wyre BC

Wyre Volunteers and the Chief Executive of Wyre Borough Council Jim Cory working on Public Rights of Way improvements on the Wyre Way

© Greg Robinson, Wyre BC

Alison Boden
Wyre Borough Council
01253 887220
aboden@wyrebc.co.uk

Social Equity & Economic Opportunity

Business Development in the Forest of Bowland AONB

Two new organisations emerged from the Forest of Bowland AONB's Sustainable Tourism Network process in the year to strengthen the work of the local tourism industry and develop its support for the work of the AONB.

Bowland Tourism Environment Fund (BTEF) has been around in an informal way for several years. It has secured donations from businesses and visitors to be able to channel grants for community projects to improve their local environment.

In June 2009, it was set up as a 'social enterprise charity' with a board of Trustees to oversee its work. The objectives of BTEF are to:

- (a) promote, enhance, improve, protect and conserve the physical and natural environment and its natural beauty for the public benefit within the Forest of Bowland, 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' (AONB) and its environs ("the area of benefit"); and
- (b) advance the education of the public in the physical and natural environment and in particular the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment.

The Trustees are from the local tourism business community. Jonty Collinson has been involved in the Priory Inn, Scorton and is a leading member of the Wyresdale Wheels project which provides an all-terrain electric wheelchair for visitors with limited mobility. Ann Shaw owns Parkfoot Holiday Park near High Bentham and is chair of the Hornby Village Institute. Colin Clifford has set up Off the Rails Cycle Hire and Holidays and is a member of the Settle Chamber of Trade.

BTEF fund-raising will be expanded, in particular by introducing more Visitor Payback schemes. It has also already been able to secure a £3000 grant from the North West Development Agency to commission a study by University of Central Lancashire to look into ways of helping rural businesses dispose of and recycle waste.



Bowland Experience Limited (BEx) was formed as a new company in August 2009 and will act as a vehicle for the development, support and promotion of commercial tourism operators. The Forest of Bowland AONB is not intended to be a tourism agency and is somewhat constrained when it comes to promoting private sector businesses. BEx is a 'Company Limited by Guarantee', which means that its members, instead of subscribing share capital, will guarantee its debts. The members are businesses which embrace the principles of the Sustainable Tourism Network. The company's Articles of Association gives a controlling interest to the BTEF for two reasons: firstly to make sure that the company will always work within the objectives of the BTEF and secondly so that any profits which the company makes will go to the charity. The Directors of the company are also representatives of the Sustainable Tourism Network and include; Jon Beavan, Edwina Miller and Robert Gardener. Jon Beavan has built the Dalesbridge Centre at Austwick into the largest Camping and Bunkhouse facility in the Forest of AONB. Edwina Miller and her husband David who run a working farm at Claughton-on-Brock, have developed Cobble Hey Farm and Gardens to be one of the leading award-winning attractions in the area. At Bleasdale Cottages, Robert Gardner and his wife Ann are one of the top self-catering providers as well as him leading the development of renewable energy for Bleasdale Parish Hall.

BEx has already been involved in coordinating promotional activity for Gisburn Forest Bike Trails, is setting up business training courses and planning to invest in further off-road wheelchair services.

All the Directors of BEx and the Trustees of BTEF have achieved Green Tourism Awards for their own businesses. Both BTEF and BEx are independent of the Forest of Bowland AONB, giving them the freedom to operate as private sector organisations for their own benefit in pursuit of the aims and objectives of the Forest of Bowland AONB.



Mike Pugh
Forest of Bowland AONB
01200 448000
mike.pugh@lancashire.gov.uk

Visit
www.bowlandtefund.org and www.bowlandexperience.com

Social Equity & Economic Opportunity

Communities and Volunteering

Bike Trails in Gisburn Forest

Volunteers worked all through last year helping hand build some of the most 'interesting' sections of mountain bike track at Gisburn Forest. There was a regular date for every other Sunday 10am to 2pm lead mainly by Martin College of the Forestry Commission and Nigel Pilling of United Utilities.

The opening event was made all the more entertaining by a short ride over parts of the new trails by some of those involved including Rupert Swarbrick, Chairman of Longridge Strategic Partnership, on what must have been the oldest mountain bike by a long way. It may have been the oldest but it was by no means the slowest and it was a relief that Rupert got back with no broken bones. The trails are really entertaining and it is good that businesses like Off the rails, Cycle Adventure and Cycle Bowland are taking full advantage of the area.

Projects in Villages and Schools

Painting of white railings makes such a difference to the look of villages in the Forest of Bowland. When you approach a village and the railings have been painted then you have an expectation that you will find the rest of the village looking well tended. This certainly applies to Chipping who won best the Lancashire Kept Village competition in 2008. Some of the other villages that took up the offer of paint and moral support from the Forest of Bowland AONB were Bolton by Bowland, Calder Vale, Longridge, Dunsop Bridge, Roughlee and Newchurch.

At the rear of Slaidburn Village Hall, there is rough banking shaded by mature trees facing an area used by the local play group. In September, the group wished that the banking could be cleared a little of brambles to host a greater variety of woodland plants and I found willing volunteers to help with the task. A local farmer provided a trailer, which was thought would be much too big for the material that we would be able to clear but in the end it was overflowing. Wildflowers that had been grown from local seed were planted there and we look forward to seeing how the area develops.

This year we have already tackled a similar task at Newton and it is pleasing to think that many village woodlands can be managed this way using local volunteers.

It was brave of us to set a couple of days aside in January to complete a long planned task of pond renovation and gardening at Lowgill School but we were rewarded by cold but fine weather. It can not be over emphasised how hard people worked and what a great job they made of a boardwalk/dipping platform and a path. This was made possible by Kath Godfrey of BTCV who drew up a plan that took all the elements asked for into an imaginative scheme and who managed these different elements through to the finish. Andrew Taylor, a local farmer, was invaluable for putting up a fence that would contain bullocks, and for donating timber and posts. Jodie Lumb the Headteacher who made the soup and helped and got all her family to help too was delighted. A real highlight!



Bike trails opening event

© Martin Charlesworth, Forest of Bowland AONB

Stone carving workshop with BTCV

© Martin Charlesworth, Forest of Bowland AONB

Martin Charlesworth

Forest of Bowland AONB

01200 448000

martin.charlesworth@lancashire.gov.uk

Social Equity & Economic Opportunity



Biodiversity

Wyre Borough Council organised two days of 'Balsam Bashing' in Garstang and Alison Boden and Martin Charlesworth took the opportunity to broadcast the task on Radio Lancashire. Key volunteers in this instance were ladies from Cabus Women's Institute and more tasks are planned in 2010 as a result of the success last year.

After a couple of incidents that saw insensitive treatment of road side verges, we worked with Ribble Valley Strategic Partnership and Lancashire County Council to address this problem. As a result Ribble Valley Strategic Partnership contributed to the cost of training Parish Lengthsmen to manage a few verges according to the prescribed management regime which will help conserve and enhance the biodiversity of those sites and Lancashire County Council are marking all 'special verges' to assist contractors avoid unnecessary cutting. In addition, Martin Charlesworth has lined up some willing volunteers lined to help with verge management should this be required.

A 1000 more trees were planted by volunteers and a student on placement for the Ribble Catchment Conservation Trust near Ribchester in March. Future work is planned with the Trust working on problem Balsam in the Forest of Bowland AONB.

Employee Volunteering

The Environment Agency has a key role to play, not least in water courses and catchment areas. Many of their staff do not of course escape from their desks too often so it was particularly pleasant for a group of them to have a good day out helping rebuild a dry stone wall and stile on a footpath at Gazegill Farm at Rimington one day in July.

The location was ideal with spot on hospitality provided by frying steak supplied from organically reared Dairy Shorthorn cattle and salad grown in the polytunnel all eaten sat on straw bales in the farm garden talking over the price of milk and efforts to diversify. Ian O'Riley and Emma Robinson, whose family have farmed there for over 400 years, talked with great enthusiasm about the challenges and the potential for organic production, rare breeds like Oxford and Sandy pigs, forerunners of the Gloucester Old Spot breed, the farm shop, direct sales of milk and education for the next generation.

The description of this idyllic day and photograph on Martin's blog has lead to several enquiries for Employee Volunteering for this year.

Special verge Sweet Cicely

© Martin Charlesworth, Forest of Bowland AONB

Balsam bashing with Wyre BC and Cabus WI

© Martin Charlesworth, Forest of Bowland AONB

Martin Charlesworth
Forest of Bowland AONB
01200 448000
martin.charlesworth@lancashire.gov.uk

Social Equity & Economic Opportunity

Community Futures in the Forest of Bowland AONB

Community Futures has continued to provide support and advice to community groups in the Forest of Bowland AONB throughout the year. Our main focus when dealing with village halls is to encourage energy efficiency measures to reduce running costs. We are now carrying out energy audits which provide the evidence to apply for funding to make buildings more efficient which in turn can reduce running costs and make them more comfortable for users. A good example is Caldervale Village Hall where we have completed an energy audit and are currently assisting them to access funding for new windows, ceiling insulation, doors and improvements to the toilets. We have also supported other village hall projects at Halton, Galgate, Aughton, Bilsborrow and Melling and are currently due to carry out a review of the Community Resource Centre Programme at Arkholme, Slaidburn, Hornby, Caton, Abbeystead, Gisburn, Chatburn & Barley to find out the current position, lessons learnt and future plans.

Community Futures completed a piece of research funded by North Lancashire Primary Care Trust looking at the carbon footprint of delivering rural health services in Bleasdale, Wray, Abbeystead, Tatham and Cowen Bridge and identified several examples of good practice which could be replicated elsewhere, such as satellite GP surgeries in village halls, prescription delivery to local shops and on-line booking and consultations.

Community Futures takes part in the Forest of Bowland AONB Joint Advisory Committee and the theme group looking at Climate Change and is assisting in organising a Renewables Tour around the Forest of Bowland AONB looking at working examples of different technologies. Community Futures also supported a Green Communities training event called 'Making it Happen' where participants found out about project planning/management with funding support from BASIS to cover costs for Community Futures and which was attended by participants from the AONB.



A day in Sabden

On 11th November, Armistice day, Martin visited Sabden Primary School with Global Renewable's outreach officers entertaining and educating children about rubbish and recycling, getting the REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE message across to a younger audience who proved to be very knowledgeable and keen to do their bit. They children loved hearing about the beneficial minibeasts, and some of their horrible habits, that live in compost heaps.

A couple of years ago the Forest of Bowland AONB contributed to the war memorial in Sabden and at 11am there was a lovely simple service there, just outside the school where Martin met the people responsible for the long campaign to raise funds for the memorial.

For further information please contact:

Finlay Hodge
Community Futures
finlayh@communityfutures.org.uk
www.communityfutures.org.uk

Martin Charlesworth
Forest of Bowland AONB
01200 448000
martin.charlesworth@lancashire.gov.uk

Sabden primary school visit
© Martin Charlesworth, Forest of Bowland AONB

Social Equity & Economic Opportunity

Lancashire Green Tourism Project

The Lancashire Green Tourism project is building on best practice developed by the Forest of Bowland AONB sustainable tourism project 'Sustainable Bowland 2006-2008' and the 2007 Green Tourism Business Scheme (GTBS) pilot. It is funded by the Forest of Bowland AONB, Lancashire County Council and the Lancashire & Blackpool Tourist Board (LBTB). The project is running from 2008 to 2011 and during the 3 years the aims of the project are to develop the sustainable tourism offer and profile of Lancashire and the Forest of Bowland AONB. The project has 3 strands of work:

- 1) Promote the county's green tourism businesses and features
- 2) Extend the number of tourism businesses that are participating in sustainable tourism activity and obtaining the national GTBS accreditation by 60 new participants countywide; and
- 3) Create 6 new tourism business clusters in the Forest of Bowland for 25 businesses, further developing sustainable tourism in the area and complementing the area's high quality environment and protected area status.

During 2009/10 the project has achieved the following:

- 16 businesses supported in achieving Green Tourism Business Scheme accreditation, including 6 gold, 7 silver and 3 bronze awards
- 2 business cluster groups developed including Bowland Experience Ltd www.bowlandexperience.com and Gisburn Forest Mountain Bike Trails www.gisburnbiketrails.com

- 55 businesses supported in terms of one to one advice, guidance and web support and 33 individuals supported in work-based training including a green ideas day and green marketing
- Website - www.lancashiregreentourism.com developed with the Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board to promote the businesses across Lancashire accredited with GTBS
- PR for project developed through consultancy, including coverage in Yorkshire Post, Manchester Evening News, Northern Echo as well as local press
- Development of resources and case studies to encourage businesses to market their green credentials and to highlight examples of good practice
- Development of business wildlife aggregate blog websites www.bowlandwildlife.org.uk and www.lancashirewildlife.org.uk

There has been an encouraging amount of enthusiasm and commitment from the businesses towards the project and undergoing GTBS accreditation. The funding towards officer time, advisory visits, web developments and training has certainly assisted in encouraging the businesses to get involved.



GTBS Awards
© Forest of Bowland AONB

Hetty Byrne
Forest of Bowland AONB
01200 448000
hetty.byrne@lancashire.gov.uk

Social Equity & Economic Opportunity

Natural tourism website developments for visitors

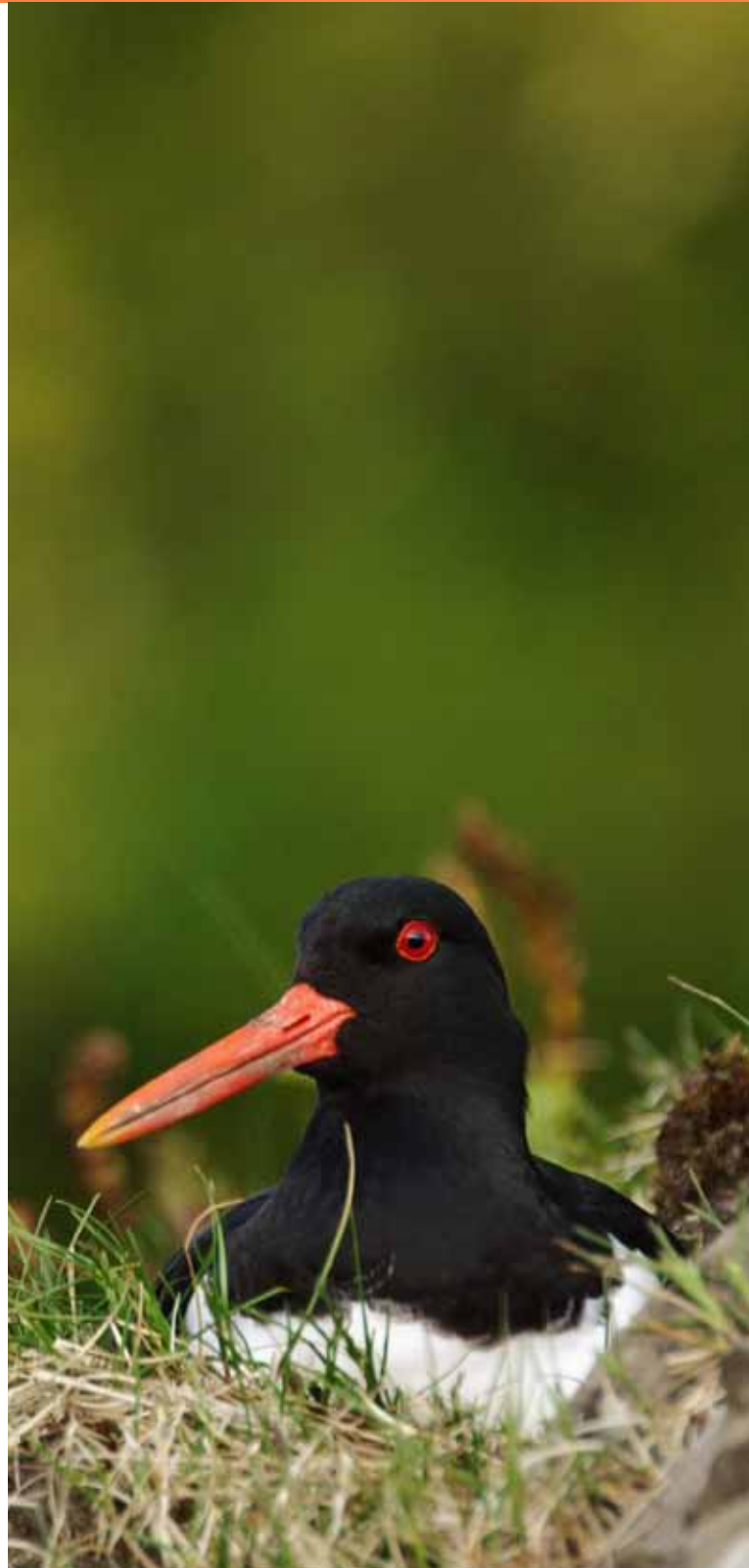
Wonderful new natural tourism focused features are now available at the Forest of Bowland AONB's website www.forestofbowland.com. The website, which acts as an online resource for nature lovers, birdwatchers and walkers, has extended its reach to communicate not just with its traditional visitors, but others who want to learn more about the Forest of Bowland AONB and its wildlife, flora and habitats.

There are now ten new self-guided wildlife or landscape walks, each illustrated with black and white line drawings and incorporating a map, directions and guidance as to what to see en route are now available for download. The walks also help protect the Forest of Bowland AONB by dispersing visitors around the area and not just focusing on its traditional honeypot destinations.

The website also boasts new pages profiling the birds of Bowland with information that help visitors interpret and understand the landscape in which their outdoor activity will take place, as well as sound clips and video links of bird song and birds living with the Forest of Bowland are now available. These include video clips taken from the 2008 hen harrier webcam.

The Interactivity of the site has also increased through the addition of an interactive calendar that highlights the key wildlife to watch each month, where to go within the AONB to see these and what events are being staged.

This work was made possible through funding from Natural Economy Northwest, Katie Read, Natural Tourism Manager; said: "We are delighted to support a project that provides a variety of high quality, interesting and interactive resources for visitors to the protected landscape of the AONB. It will enable visitors to better appreciate how to respect and enjoy the natural environment, whilst reducing impacts on it by promoting specific routes that are suitable access opportunities for visitors to use. It will also help the Forest of Bowland AONB area derive a greater income from tourism – one of the eleven economic and social benefits that the natural environment provides."



Oystercatcher
© Tom Marshall

Hetty Byrne
Forest of Bowland AONB
01200 448000
hetty.byrne@lancashire.gov.uk

Social Equity & Economic Opportunity

Forest of Bowland AONB Sustainable Development Fund

2009 was a bumper year for the Forest of Bowland AONB's Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) with over £100,000 in the kitty thanks to support not only from Natural England, but also Lancashire County Council and Lancaster City Council's Local Strategic Partnership. The grants panel awarded 18 grants to a diverse range of activities including nature conservation with the RSPB Wader Project receiving our biggest grant of the year. SDF supported the running costs of this important project and enabled the RSPB to develop three major Higher Level Stewardship applications which will enable over 330 hectares of land to be managed specifically for breeding wading birds. The project also ran a number of festival events, and the annual lapwing survey.

Education and awareness

The Forest of Bowland AONB & RSPB Outreach Education Project ran for a second year of primary schools across the AONB, visiting eight schools including Abbeystead, Wray, Grindleton and Rathmell. The schools each had three half day classroom sessions where the children learned about birds, their habitats and the Forest of Bowland AONB and culminated in a visit to a farm where the children were able to meet a farmer and find out how birds are encouraged to nest and breed on their farmland.

SDF also supported Gazegill Farm to develop educational facilities on this organic farm lying at the foot of Pendle. Classroom equipment for a recently converted 'education barn', plus a new scanner to check pregnant sows were purchased to enhance pupils learning experiences.

In 2009/10 Quernmore school have developed a new sensory garden, with input from artist Sue Flowers and support from the SDF. This sensory garden will provide a haven for bees and butterflies as well as be a place for students and parishioners to reflect and relax.

Sue Flowers also co-ordinated the Bowland Arts Festival in 2009 and 2010 with SDF support. Over 40 events including stone carving workshops, concerts, exhibitions and sculpture walks make up this exciting two month festival throughout the Forest of Bowland AONB.

The AONB's own Landscape Stories project used a small SDF grant to employ a professional photographer to document the project, and to run a community digital photography course.

Middlewood Trust received two grants this year; the first to carry out a feasibility study and the second to help refurbish their study centre as an exemplar sustainable building: complete with solar showers, compost toilets and renewable energy-powered underfloor heating.

Sustainable Tourism

Supporting the AONB's work on sustainable tourism has been one of our key criteria for a few years now. At Waddow Hall, a Girlguiding UK centre just outside Clitheroe, we helped improve the energy efficiency of their various accommodation blocks by installing insulation, radiator panels, lighting sensors and energy efficient light bulbs and water saving devices. These will help reduce energy use at the centre, which is now holds a silver GTBS award.

SDF also supported the AONB's own Lancashire Green Tourism Project by providing match funding to this partnership project with Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board and Lancashire County Developments Ltd. This has enabled the project to work in the Craven part of the AONB, to support business development work in the area, and to assist seven new Bowland businesses to achieve GTBS accreditation.

Fishing is an important contributor to the visitor economy in the Forest of Bowland, so we were happy to offer Ribble Catchment Conservation Trust a small grant to help develop their 'fishing passport' scheme, an innovative scheme which helps to put funding back into the environment. The passport scheme will enable anglers to purchase vouchers to go day fishing on stretches of river which have been enhanced by the Trust, and which would otherwise not be available to fish.



Snapshot 2010
© Veronica Caperon

Cathy Hopley
Forest of Bowland AONB
01200 448000
cathy.hopley@lancashire.gov.uk

Social Equity & Economic Opportunity

Community Projects

We supported four interesting community projects this year. At Halton, on the Lune just outside the AONB but serving the community within, we assisted with the upgrading and extension of a popular community centre by funding the purchase and installation of a rainwater harvesting system. This enables rainwater gathered from the roof to be stored and reused for toilets and showers, thus reducing the dependence and costs of main water supplies.

At Hornby we helped Hornby Institute to continue with their energy efficiency work. This year the village trust wanted to improve the hall heating system so that only the rooms being used needed to be heated, and SDF support enabled this to be carried out.

In Dunsop Bridge SDF gave another small grant to Bowland Wool, a developing community interest company. This paid for a small amount of locally sourced wool to be spun and dyed and knitted up into garments which were then exhibited at a fashion show held at the Inn at Whitewell. Bowland Wool hope to be able to commission local knitters to continue with this work and to generate enough funding to process the next years crop of wool.

Transition Town Clitheroe is one of a growing network of towns seeking to develop transition plans for life after peak oil. Our small grant helped them to purchase videos and books to put on loan in the local library, and to raise awareness of their activities.

Composting

Finally, SDF supported two very different composting projects this year. At Growing with Grace, a Clapham based organic market garden, their existing composting business has been overhauled and renewed with the purchase of new equipment and employment of a development worker who will trial new varieties of compost and research the market. This project was co-supported by the Yorkshire Dales SDF

At the Gibbon Bridge, one of the Forest of Bowland AONB's largest, and greenest accommodation providers, SDF supported their purchase of a shredder to help compost both garden waste from the hotel's large grounds, and cardboard waste. The latter is used for bedding for pigs, geese, ducks and chickens which are all farmed on the site.



Middle Wood Trust refurbished Study Centre
© Forest of Bowland AONB

Bowland Wool
© Forest of Bowland AONB

Cathy Hopley
Forest of Bowland AONB
01200 448000
cathy.hopley@lancashire.gov.uk

Social Equity & Economic Opportunity

Sustainable Tourism in the Forest of Bowland AONB

The Forest of Bowland AONB was awarded the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in protected areas in 2005, and was the first protected area in England to achieve this accolade. As the Charter has a five year lifetime, we wanted to be sure that we were ready to re apply for it in 2010. This meant re visiting our strategy for sustainable tourism, and developing a new action plan for driving this forward from 2010 to 2015.

A strategy for sustainable tourism needs to reflect the thinking, wishes and issues of all partners involved in tourism, including business owners, tourism officers and other professionals. A number of meetings were held in the summer of 2009 to draw together these people and identify our common aims which were agreed to be:

1. Develop a strong brand identity for the Forest of Bowland as a destination
2. Develop and promote tourism products which reflect and celebrate the Forest of Bowland's sense of place
3. Develop and promote products which encourage quiet, accessible and quality enjoyment of the Forest of Bowland
4. Support the area's tourism businesses to develop high quality and sustainable practices, and to maintain a sustainable network of businesses
5. Support local communities and volunteers to ensure engagement in tourism planning, and to generate community benefit from tourism activity
6. Develop and maintain partnerships supporting the development and management of sustainable tourism in the Forest of Bowland
7. Develop strategies to improve the collection and analysis of tourism related data so that informed decisions can be made by all partners



These consultation events also identified the key successes of the last five years, these were that:

- The AONB is seen more as a destination in its own right, rather than, for example, being 'close to the Yorkshire Dales and the Lake District'
- The special qualities of the area are better understood and promoted by partners, largely as a result of our Sense of Place work
- Businesses are fully engaged, through the Sustainable Tourism Business Network and Forum in developing and promoting the area for sustainable tourism
- The sustainable tourism product has been significantly developed – in terms of new routeways, accommodation, activities and services
- Marketing and promotion of the AONB is better co-ordinated and of a high and branded quality

A full copy of the revised strategy, together with the action plan, can be viewed at www.forestofbowland.com/publ_plans

In December 2009 we submitted an application to the Europarc Federation for the renewal of our Charter; and in April 2010 we will host a verification visit to assess our application and are hopeful that later in the year we will receive good news!

Cathy Hopley
Forest of Bowland AONB
01200 448000
cathy.hopley@lancashire.gov.uk

Social Equity & Economic Opportunity

New Website reveals the wilder side of the Forest of Bowland

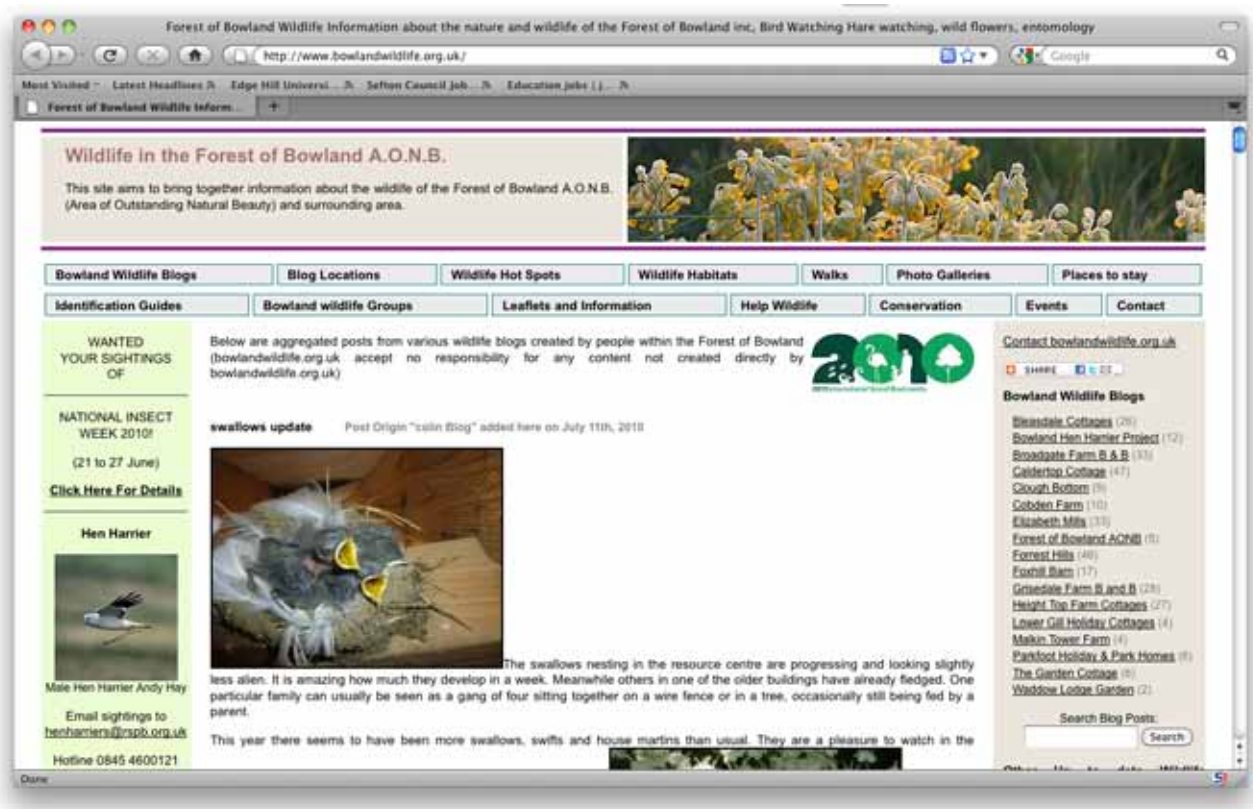
A group of green tourism businesses in the Forest of Bowland AONB teamed up to help visitors discover the wildlife hotspots of this beautiful area by creating a Bowland wildlife website www.bowlandwildlife.org.uk. The website highlights the best places to see the rich wildlife that inhabits the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the surrounding countryside.

The project involves 16 tourism businesses who are either accredited in The Green Tourism Business Scheme (GTBS) or are members of the Forest of Bowland Sustainable Tourism Business Network who are working with the Forest of Bowland AONB through the Lancashire Green Tourism Project

The businesses provide up to date wildlife sightings via their individual blogs which are then automatically added to the [bowlandwildlife.org.uk](http://www.bowlandwildlife.org.uk) website. An online map of the area shows exactly where different species can be found and visitors are encouraged to get involved through signposting to a variety of conservation projects and events.

A regular contributor to the wildlife blog is Colin Newsham, owner of Forrest Hills – a rural events venue set on the edge of the Forest of Bowland, says: "We've had people ringing up and booking green conferences as a direct result of seeing the new site. It's excellent. People are really keen to find out about the wildlife that lives here and now it's just a click away"

Another of the businesses, Bleasdale Self Catering Cottages at Lower Fairsnape Farm in Bleasdale is an RSPB designated hotspot for breeding wading birds and has a thriving population of brown hares. It has also won awards for its efforts in lapwing conservation. The owner Ann Gardner says: "It's great to work together on a project like this. The location here is very special and we want to share our insider knowledge with everyone to help them enjoy their stays here as much as possible."



Hetty Byrne
Forest of Bowland AONB
01200 448000
hetty.byrne@lancashire.gov.uk

Enjoyment

Festival Bowland



Festival Bowland is a 'year-round' calendar of events that celebrate the birds, wildlife, landscape and culture of the Forest of Bowland AONB. Festival Bowland events allow us to showcase the area's special qualities and share with others what makes it such a special

place for people and wildlife. Events are led by local experts, landowners and businesses and provide a wealth of opportunities for people to explore the area's special qualities throughout the year.

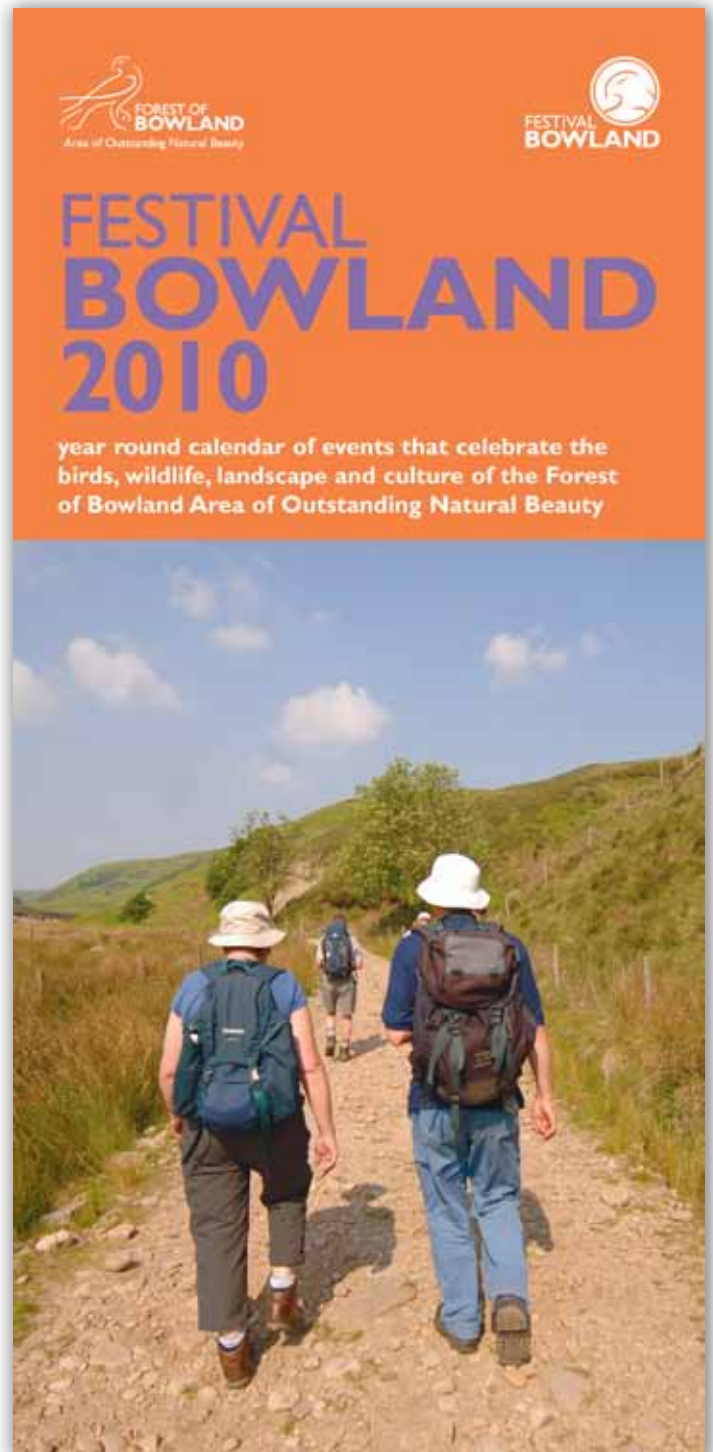
Events in 2009 were well attended with people taking the change from a fortnightly event to year round calendar in their stride.

The 2010 calendar, including Bowland Arts Festival, has 155 events throughout the year in and around the Forest of Bowland AONB.

Early evaluation has shown excellent attendance with many events being fully booked.

Festival Bowland is coordinated by the Forest of Bowland AONB. The steering group includes: RSPB Birds of Bowland Project, United Utilities, Lancashire County Council, Wyre Borough Council and Bowland Arts Festival. Also supporting the festival are: Natural England, The Wildlife Trusts of Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside, Heritage Lottery Fund as well as local businesses, landowners and farmers.

A copy of the Festival Bowland calendar of events can be viewed and downloaded at www.forestofbowland.com



Susan MacDonald
Forest of Bowland AONB
01200 448000
susan.macdonald@lancashire.gov.uk

Garstang Walking Festival 2009

2009 saw another successful year for the Garstang Walking Festival, which ran from the launch on Friday 8th May to Sunday 17th May 2009. The number of attendances on activities increased once again by 9% from the previous year, with just short of 1000 (997 actual) attendances for the various walks and events. 34% of those attending did so for the first time, with 66% repeat customers. Garstang Walking Festival provides a great way to promote the natural and cultural heritage of Garstang, the Lancaster Canal and the Forest of Bowland AONB and brings together a wide variety of organisations, business' and volunteers from the local community who are wonderful advocates of the area. In addition to linking with local business' such as Cobble Hey Farm & Gardens, Bleasdale Cottages and the Priory, the Festival also supports and works with local voluntary groups such as Bleasdale Parish, Calder Vale (Barnacre with Bonds) Parish, Bowland Pennine Mountain Rescue Team, Garstang in Bloom Volunteers, Garstang Cycling Club, Garstang Millennium Green Management Group, together with partner organisation such as Lancashire Countryside Service and the RSPB.

Garstang is one of the key gateways for visitors to the Forest of Bowland AONB from the West. Half of the 57 activities took place within the Forest of Bowland AONB itself, with a further 17 taking place within the AONB 2km buffer zone. Activities ranged from skyline walks, farm visits, heritage walks, cycle rides, tramper treks, natural history walks, discovering about dendrology, fell top rambles, bird watches, health walks, to sustainable walks using the local Super 8 bus service.

Promoted Routes managed by Wyre Countryside Rangers

Wyre Countryside Rangers has been working hard with its keen band of Volunteers to help proactively manage the locally promoted routes within the Borough including part of the Forest of Bowland AONB. Previously, all the Circular Walks within the Borough, created and advertised through leaflets and/or websites, were checked by Wyre Countryside Service on a twice-yearly basis. This has now been taken one stage further where Wyre Volunteer Rangers adopt certain routes themselves to look after and care for.

The Countryside Service still maintains overall control of the routes, but each Volunteer plans their twice yearly survey, undertakes general light maintenance tasks and reports any larger jobs through to the Ranger team. These larger jobs are now placed on a rolling rota for repair or upgrade by a regular fortnightly Public Rights of Way practical team of Volunteers. This new system should help to improve a series of routes, which were already proactively managed, and maintain them to a higher standard making them easier to use and follow. The bi-annual surveys of promoted walking routes within the Forest of Bowland AONB include: Scorton area x 8, Calder Vale x 8, Delph Quarry, Brock Valley, and sections of the Wyre Way. A total of 54 miles of public right of way surveyed within the Forest of Bowland AONB.

Wyre Way

A new section of concessionary footpath, along the long distance recreational route of the Wyre Way has been agreed with Landowner, Tenant and Angling Club at Street Bridge, Nether Wyresdale. This new section means that walkers no longer need to walk on the busy twisting road between the two footpath termination points, but can go straight over and continue along the river. The Chief Executive of Wyre Borough Council joined the Wyre Countryside Volunteers for the day and helped them to install the new steps, handrails and gate on a lovely warm and sunny spring day.



Canal and farm walk
© Wyre BC

Garstang Walking Festival
© Wyre BC

Geocache walk
© Wyre BC

Alison Boden
Wyre Coast & Countryside Service
01253 887220
countryside@wyrebc.gov.uk
www.wyrebc.gov.uk

Enjoyment

Forest of Bowland's 'Tramping' success spreads across the North West

Since Lancashire County Council started using Trampers - electric all-terrain wheelchairs at Beacon Fell Country Park, interest in how they can contribute to the visitor experience has grown significantly across the Forest of Bowland AONB. The word has spread resulting in several visits during 2009 from local authorities and their partners from across the country including the Yorkshire Dales National Park and representatives from the North West Local Access Forums. Some of these partners are now looking to support the use of all-terrain wheelchairs in their respective areas.

Since 2007 the Wyresdale Wheels: Access for All Project has been operating in the west side of Bowland with a Trampler shared between 12 local rural businesses. A leaflet promotes the businesses and how they are linked by Trampler trails. There are five detailed trails downloadable from www.forestofbowland.com. Several of the routes take you over farmland managed for ground nesting waders with the opportunity to view them from accessible bird-hides. The areas covered are also good for spotting brown hare.

An on line booking system is now available linking accommodation and Trampler bookings with options to book other activities such as fishing and guided walks.

Demand for the Wyresdale Wheels Trampler is so high that the Forest of Bowland AONB partnership, with grant support from Natural England, has recently purchased a new all-terrain wheelchair, the TGA Breeze 4', which is on long term loan to the Wyresdale Wheels partnership. Based on feedback from users the decision was made to try an alternative to the Trampler and compare the two over 12 months. Both all terrain wheelchairs are available to hire for a nominal cost to cover maintenance, via Scorton Post Office on 01524 791329.



Europarc Visit at Cobble Hey
© Tarja Wilson, LCC

NWLAF Visit
© Tarja Wilson, LCC

TGA Breeze 4 vehicles
© Tarja Wilson, LCC

Tarja Wilson
Lancashire County Council Countryside Service
07887 830853
tarja.wilson@lancashire.gov.uk

Enjoyment

Wyre Environment Week 2009

A variety of events and activities occurred right around the Borough of Wyre during Environment Week including a promotional display for the whole week at Barton Granges new Garden Centre on the A6. The display was manned by volunteers daily and promoted both the work of the Countryside Service and the Forest of Bowland AONB, local businesses, walks and activities in both areas and a range of environmental advice.

Garstang Millennium Green finished its new family area and had it officially opened by TV Gardner Christine Walkden on 4th June. The area is dog free and includes picnic benches, wildflower area and storytelling area. The Millennium Green is an important Gateway into Bowland taking much of the pedestrian traffic between Garstang and Scorton.

Two Himalayan Balsam Pulling activities were organised, the first was held on 4th June and the second was a couple of weeks later. Both activities were organised in conjunction with the Forest of Bowland AONB unit, at the request of the local Women's Institute. These activities were based on the riverside at Garstang and volunteers and members of the public removed a whole section of Balsam, preventing it from seeding and spreading further. Wyre's Parks and Open Spaces team removed the pulled Balsam off site.

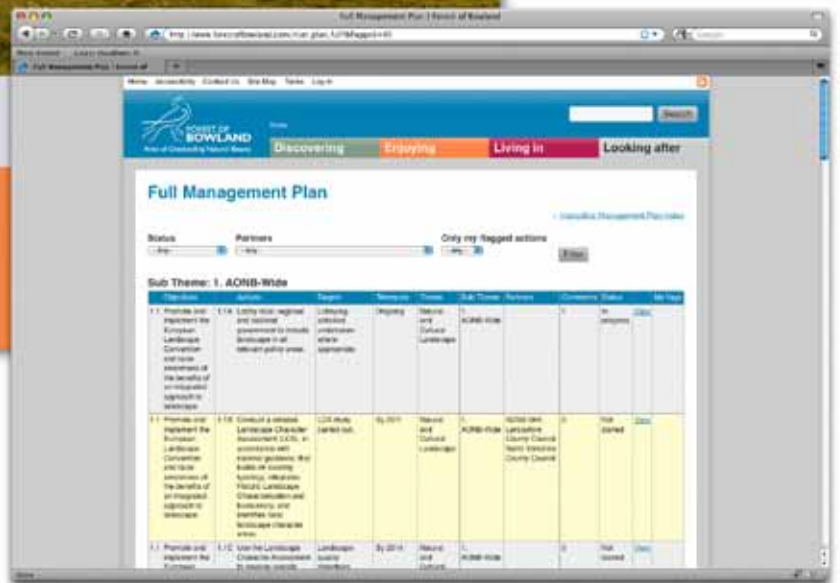
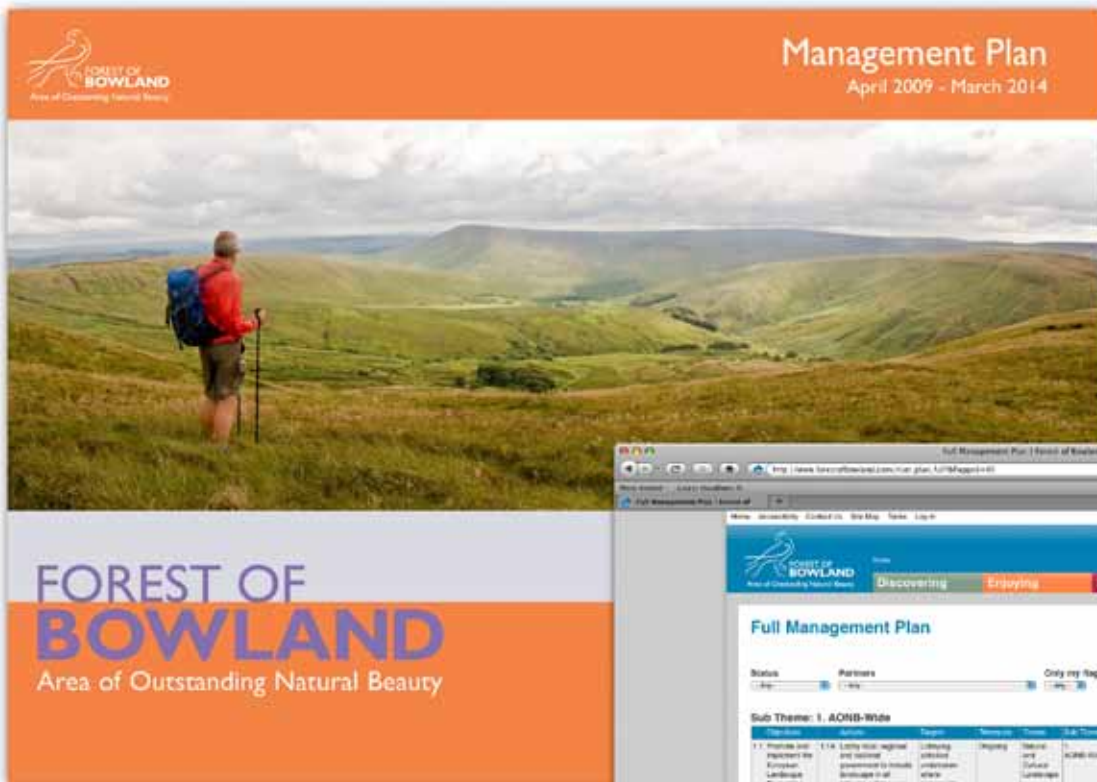
Following the Success of last year's Environment Day activity day for local Schools, Bleasdale Parish decided to host another similar day in 2009. Almost 200 children from 12 local schools visited Bleasdale and partook in a number of different activities within the Parish Hall grounds, Parish Woodland, Bleasdale School Woodland and Lower Fairsnape Farm. Funding for the day came from a BBC Breathing Places Grant awarded to Bleasdale Parish Hall and once again the day proved very successful.



Bleasdale Environment Day
© Wyre Borough Council

Alison Boden
Wyre Coast & Countryside Service
01253 887220
countryside@wyrebc.gov.uk
www.wyrebc.gov.uk

Coordination & Management



Forest of Bowland AONB Statutory Management Plan 2009-2014

Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty's Statutory Management Plan 2009-2014 was launched in April 2009. This new, revised management plan is available to download at www.forestofbowland.com.

This online version of the plan is dynamic in the way it can be viewed and updated. The plan itself can be viewed and printed by theme, in addition, you can search the action plan section by topic or organisation and partners are also able to update progress on the objectives and actions electronically, enabling online monitoring of the delivery of the management plan.

Producing the Forest of Bowland AONB Management plan in this way enables us to be energy and cost efficient, saving money, ink and paper on expensive print. We felt that by doing this we would be setting an example in the move towards the 'paperless' office, a shift that is being encouraged by Lancashire County Council Environment Directorate. We also wanted to make viewing and updating the Forest of Bowland AONB's Management Plan a dynamic and interactive experience and be transparent in the progress we are making with our aims and objectives.

Susan MacDonald
Forest of Bowland AONB
01200 448000
susan.macdonald@lancashire.gov.uk

Coordination & Management

Martin's BLOG

Martin Charlesworth, Community Projects Officer for the Forest of Bowland AONB started his infamous 'blog' at www.forestofbowland.com in September 2009.

Martin's work for the AONB sees him meeting many people in the area and his blog gives him the perfect excuse to ask; 'Can I put a photo of you on my blog?' or 'Can I mention that on my blog?'. Often entertaining, Martin's blog gives an 'alternative' tone of voice to the Forest of Bowland AONB website and reports on the day to day work of our Community Officer. To see Martin's favourite posting – 1st April 2010 and many more, visit www.forestofbowland.com and click on Martin's blog on the homepage.



BOWLAND

Blog posting, 1st April 2010
© sdmkdesign.com

Martin Charlesworth
Forest of Bowland AONB
01200 448000
martin.charlesworth@lancashire.gov.uk

Coordination & Management

Forest of Bowland Review of Governance

In 2009 the Forest of Bowland AONB team went through a Review of Governance during which we held a number of AONB Unit and Partnership meetings. These reviewed both our internal staffing, and the structure of the Partnership.

Internal staffing

As a result of these meetings each action that the AONB Unit was identified as delivering within the Forest of Bowland AONB Management Plan 2009-14 was split between the staff of the AONB Unit Team, clearly identifying for each action a lead officer and level of priority. This division of roles and responsibilities is now reflected in the heading up of proposed theme and task & finish groups (see below) as well as the following changes to the team's job titles and roles:

AONB Sustainable Tourism & website development Officer – Hetty Byrne

AONB Community Projects Officer – Martin Charlesworth

AONB Development & Funding Officer – Cathy Hopley

AONB Communications & Publicity Officer – Susan MacDonald

AONB Principal Officer – Don McKay

AONB Business Development Officer – Mike Pugh

AONB Landscapes Stories Project Officer – Sandra Silk

Proposal for a New Role

Whilst going through this process a gap became very evident in the delivery of many of the actions relating to our core purpose 'to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural landscape'. With this in mind, it is proposed that in the medium to long term we seek to secure funding to appoint a new full time post of 'Landscape and Biodiversity Officer' for the Forest of Bowland AONB.

Review of Partnership Structure

The review of Governance then went on to explore the current Partnership structure:

- It was agreed that the current Officers Technical Group (OTC) should be disbanded as it was becoming impossible for it to deal with the breadth of work issues now covered by the Team.
- In addition, the proposed new method for monitoring delivery of the Management Plan should enable greater participation and engagement by partners in reviewing the plan.

It was therefore agreed by the Forest of Bowland Joint Advisory Committee (JAC), that the existing Officers Technical Committee be disbanded and replaced by a number of new and existing theme groups. In addition a number of 'task and finish' groups were also to be set up to tackle specific pieces of work identified as current priorities, each with a nominated lead member of AONB Unit staff or Countryside Officer; and an invited membership of AONB Partners with particular skills or expertise:

The new Theme Groups set up to date are as follows

- Natural and Cultural Landscapes
- Sustainable Tourism
- Climate Change

In addition the following groups will be created in the course of 2010

- Access and Recreation
- Farming and Landowners

Task and Finish Groups to run will include

- Lancashire Green Tourism steering group
- SDF panel
- Education
- Volunteering

Theme Group terms of reference

The groups will meet regularly as necessary, ie 2-4 times a year and they will develop an action plan of projects which help deliver the Management Plan objectives set in their area. These projects may be

- partners own projects which deliver against Management Plan objectives, for example, RSPB's Birds of Bowland project
- AONB Unit projects, for example Landscape Stories Projector
- joint pieces of work, such as a one off event or conference, or developing a web page

The allocated member of staff for each group is responsible for ensuring the interactive management plan is updated for these priority objectives, and will also support the group in reporting to the JAC on a regular basis. This report may be in the form of a site visit, a presentation or workshop.

Don McKay
AONB Manager
01200 448000
donald.mckay@lancashire.gov.uk

Coordination & Management

Relocation! Relocation!

On the 21 September 2009 after many years of dispersal between separate offices in Preston and Clitheroe and travelling back and forward the members of the AONB Unit and local countryside staff were able to move to a single office accessible to all parts of the designated area. A review of governance some years previously had highlighted the need for the Forest of Bowland AONB offices to be within or close to the Forest of Bowland and more accessible to local communities.

Around seven ago I was shown around the disused and semi derelict former Root Hill Estate Yard workshops near Dunsop Bridge. At that time the restoration of the buildings to beneficial use was just a pipe dream. The Duchy of Lancaster however saw the potential to restore and convert them as a rural business centre.

A local architect experienced in renovation of local buildings of character was commissioned by the Duchy to draw up the plans for conversion, retaining their vernacular style and features. Planning permission was granted and a firm skilled in restoration was commissioned to carry out the sensitive restoration work. The result - a combination of modern office space but faithful to the original character and retaining many of the details of the original stables and workshops, such as the original roof trusses. External outward facing fenestration from the group of buildings was kept true to the original window dimensions but the internal yard area allowed more scope for modern glazing features giving the benefit of greater natural lighting and the sense of linking the internal space with external. Sheeps' wool insulation is used in the walling and modern heat exchange technology in the wall mounted units. The high standard of restoration of Root Hill Estate Yard to modern business units won the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors' North West Commercial Award 2010.

After some challenging IT problems to resolve, transferring telephone contracts, organising office removals from Clitheroe, and arranging to obtain more second hand furniture from Lancashire County Council stores, not to mention ensuring we met Health & Safety requirements, we were operational by the end of September 2009.

The move to new offices combined with our commitment to support sustainability prompted the AONB unit to adopt environmentally friendly practices. These also have the benefit of keeping the bills down.

The new office has 1400 sq ft office space to host AONB Unit & LCC staff working in the local area. It has a meeting/training room to accommodate up to 20 people and has been put to good use on a regular basis. A hot-desking facility for partner organisations has been taken up by Natural England staff working locally on Environmental Stewardship and SSSI work.

The new office complex was officially opened in March 2010 by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster; former Leader of the House of Lords, the Baroness Royall together with Lord Shuttleworth see <http://www.placenorthwest.co.uk/news/archive/5721-duchy-officially-opens-root-hill-farm-offices.html>

Renovation and conversion of the estate workshops is part of ambitious plans by the Duchy of Lancaster to provide new vitality to the community of Dunsop Bridge with investment that includes affordable housing and restoration of derelict farm buildings to holiday accommodation subject to making suitable progress on obtaining planning permission.

On a morning commute to the office with a colleague some months back we stopped briefly to take a photo of the fells framed by a rainbow and realised the rainbows end looked to be at our new offices at Root Hill Estate Yard. Well I've heard that there is a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow but I think in the case of the AONB offices the flock of goldfinches at our bird feeding station provide as much gold as anyone could want in this life. Last year's challenging winter made sure we packed a spade in the boot of our vehicles but if times get harder we might just need those spades to start digging to find that pot of gold!



Root Hill new office
© Forest of Bowland AONB

Some neighbours pop round for a bite!
© Forest of Bowland AONB

Don McKay
AONB Manager
01200 448000
donald.mckay@lancashire.gov.uk

Financial Summary

Forest of Bowland AONB Joint Advisory Committee Budget

	Actual 2009/2010 (Out-turn prices) £'s
EXPENDITURE	
Salary, N.I and Superannuation	192,139
Outbased premises costs	34,458
Travel and subsistence	12,868
Central, departmental and technical support	62,671
Core activities	31,093
Projects/Information	261,844
TOTAL COST TO BE RECOVERED	595,073
INCOME	
Government Grants	
Natural England	282,583
Heritage Lottery Fund	24,950
Contributions	
United Utilities	7,100
Other Project Contributions	110,187
County Councils	
Lancashire	58,982
North Yorkshire	7,100
District Councils	
Craven	7,100
Lancaster	6,000
Pendle	7,100
Preston	7,100
Ribble Valley	7,100
Wyre	7,100
SUB TOTAL – LOCAL AUTHORITIES	107,582
TOTAL INCOME RECEIVED	532,402
CONTRIBUTION TO SUPPORT COSTS (in kind)	
Lancashire County Council	62,671
	595,073

Membership



Membership and Terms of Reference of the Joint Advisory Committee 2009/10

Lancashire County Council

County Councillor A Atkinson
County Councillor S Charles
County Councillor D Smith

North Yorkshire County Council

County Councillor D L Ireton
Craven District Council
Councillor D Whaites

Lancaster City Council

Councillor S Langhorn

Wyre Borough Council

Councillor R Brooks

Ribble Valley Borough Council

Councillor Mrs R Elms

Preston City Council

Councillor A Gornall

Pendle Borough Council

Councillor J Starkie

Lancashire Association of Parish and Town Councils

Mr M Helm

Yorkshire Local Councils Association

Councillor C Price

United Utilities

Mr I Grindy

Natural England

Susannah England

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)

Andrew Gouldstone

Forest of Bowland Landowning and Farming Advisory Group

Henry Bainbridge

Ramblers Association

Mr D Kelly

Northern approach to Bowland Knotts

© Graham Cooper, www.forestofbowlandimages.com

Membership

The Committee and its constituent bodies are playing the major role in ensuring that the Forest of Bowland Management Plan is implemented. 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 AONB is conserved and managed effectively,
- 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 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



Sawley Abbey and Pendle Hill
© Charlie Hedley, Natural England

Contact

Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The Stables
4 Root Hill Estate Yard
Whitewell Road
Dunsop Bridge
BB7 3AY

Tel/Fax: 01200 448000
bowland@lancashire.gov.uk
www.forestofbowland.com

AONB Unit

Don McKay

AONB Officer

Tel: 01200 448000
Mobile: 07973 928315
Email: donald.mckay@lancashire.gov.uk

Hetty Byrne

AONB Sustainable Tourism & Website Development Officer

Tel/Fax: 01200 448000
Mobile: 07989 258671
Email: hetty.byrne@lancashire.gov.uk

Martin Charlesworth

AONB Community Projects Officer

Tel/Fax: 01200 448000
Mobile: 07989 258675
Email: martin.charlesworth@lancashire.gov.uk

Cathy Hopley

AONB Development & Funding Officer

Tel/Fax: 01200 448000
Mobile: 07891 537835
Email: cathy.hopley@lancashire.gov.uk

Susan MacDonald

AONB Communications Officer

Tel/Fax: 01200 448000
Mobile: 07973 925312
Email: susan.macdonald@lancashire.gov.uk

Mike Pugh

AONB Business Development Officer

Tel/Fax: 01200 448000
Mobile: 07989 258672
Email: mike.pugh@lancashire.gov.uk

Sandra Silk

AONB Landscape Stories Project

Tel/Fax: 01200 448000
Mobile: 07973 923142
Email: sandra.silk@lancashire.gov.uk

Lancashire County Council Area Countryside Officers

Dave Oyston

East Lancashire including Pendle Hill

Tel: 07771 995615
Email: david.oyston@lancashire.gov.uk

Dave Padley

Bowland East

Tel: 07860 578558
Email: david.padley@lancashire.gov.uk

Tarja Wilson

Bowland North and West

Tel: 01200 448000
Mobile: 07887 830853
Email: tarja.wilson@lancashire.gov.uk

Other Countryside Services

Alison Boden

Wyre Coast & Countryside Service

Tel: 01253 887220
Email: aboden@wyrebc.gov.uk
www.wyrebc.gov.uk

United Utilities

Bowland Estate Office

Tel: 01200 454400
www.unitedutilities.com